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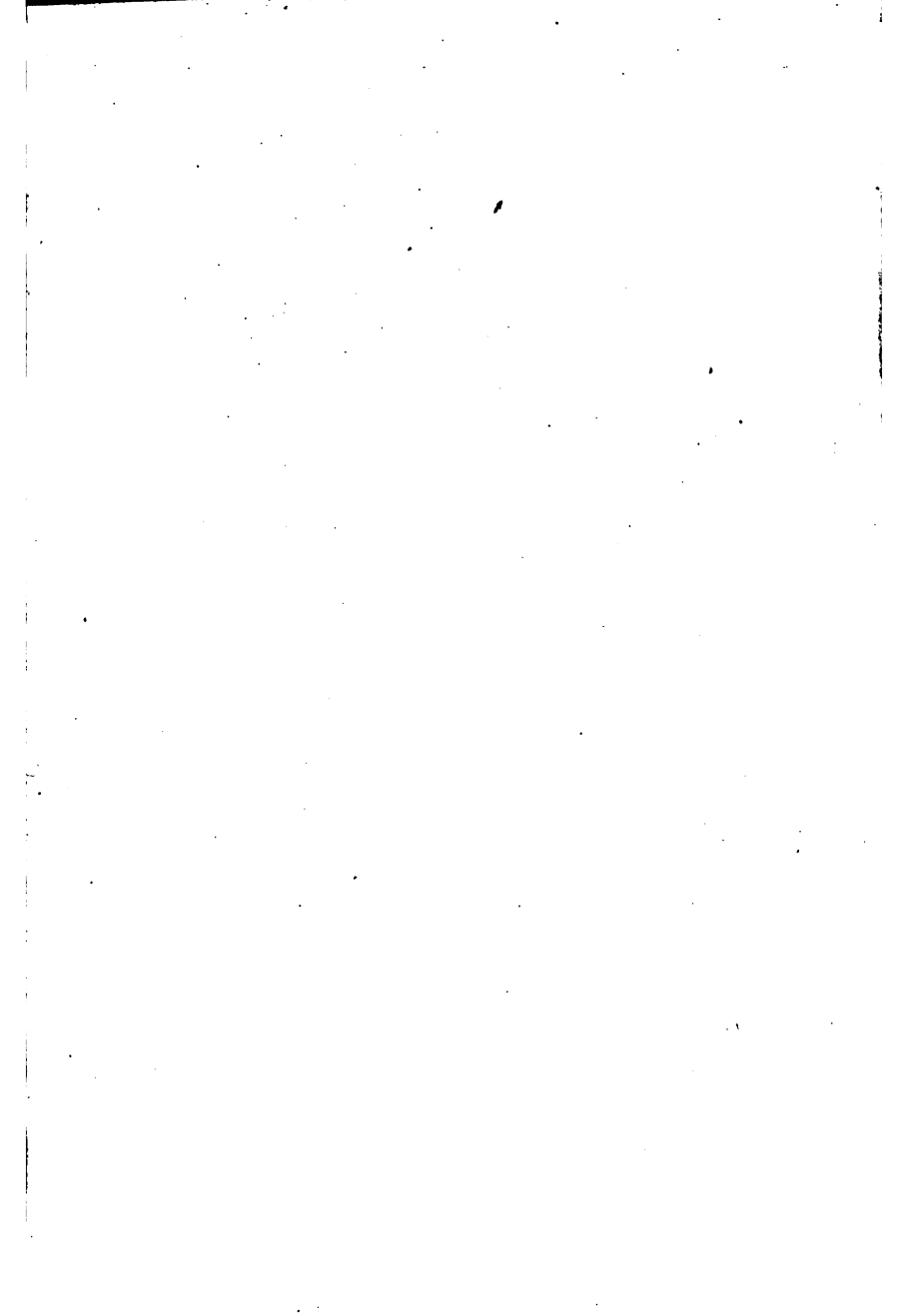
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OUR  
REFUGEE HOUSEHOLD,

BY  
MRS. LOUISE CLACK,  
OF  
LOUISIANA.

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NEW YORK:  
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1866.



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Entered according to Act of Congress,

By Mrs. LOUISE CLACK,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for  
the Southern District of New York.

TO  
MY KIND FRIEND  
MADAME EDMOND DESLONDE,  
OF NEW ORLEANS,  
THIS  
VOLUME IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY  
THE AUTHOR.



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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the human brain.

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## OUR REFUGEE HOUSEHOLD.

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I do not put the word "preface" at the beginning of my book, although, kind reader, this *avant-courier* is intended as such. I confess my reason is my own want of courtesy to the prefaces of others, and my fear that most of my readers, especially my female ones, will prove as uncourteous to mine. I affirm, however, that often, after being much interested in some authors, I have read their prefaces and found a great deal of interest in them. You will not find much in this; but I would like you to peruse it for the better understanding of the subsequent pages.

As you read the book you will, I have no doubt, notice a certain incompleteness in its pages; an incompleteness consequent, I may say, upon the change in our public affairs since its commencement, which change has made it necessary for me to omit many passages relative to our hopes and desires during the progress of the war.

As the war advanced, and the circle of country—for those who had left their homes, and who were called refugees—became narrower and narrower, it was difficult for them to obtain habitations. Those of my readers who have never been refugees will hardly credit the assertion that I make, of having often seen families, who had every comfort in the homes they had left, reduced to the necessity of living by the side of the railroad track, in the old box-cars that had been switched off as being unfit for their ordinary use. Gently-bred women and delicate children lived in this way; sometimes for a year or more, and without murmuring. One car would be their kitchen, another their bedroom, a third for their negroes. Our household was better off than this, for we really had a house, though its floors and walls were bare, its windows curtainless, and our furniture only that which was absolutely necessary for use, such as beds, tables, chairs, and a few dishes. Of food we usually had enough, and for this we were thankful, for many had not even this boon.

Some of the refugee houses among us were daintily and tastefully arranged, but such belonged to those who had come out in the beginning of the war, and thus were not samples, but exceptions. One family, consisting of a mother and four daugh-

ters, could not obtain even the necessary dishes from which to eat and serve their meals—they could not afford to give the prices asked. They had three plates and a tin pan, and the daughters took their turn in eating from the tin pan. This is an index of a good many households, and of the sacrifices made by elegant women, accustomed from childhood to every luxury that a Southern home and purse could furnish. With the assistance of colored shawls, and Afghans, and evergreens in winter, and flowers in summer, we gave somewhat of a cheerful appearance to our houses. The Afghans thrown over wooden settees, the colored shawls over pine tables, took away somewhat from the dreariness of the bare floors and walls, and, being lighted up in winter by large pine knots, they were really bright. We endeavored, particularly, to make our homes thus cheerful when any of our soldiers came to visit us, and it delighted our hearts when the brave fellows would exclaim, "What delightful homes you all have!" forgetting, in the happiness of domestic life, that they, or we, had ever possessed better.

In some towns, large buildings, such as colleges and seminaries, were taken by a number of families, perhaps thirty or forty living, with few exceptions, in harmony. Such was the case in Macon



and Athens, Georgia, and in Columbia, South Carolina. In this way, not only were many strong friendships made, but, also, life-long attachments.

Dean Trench remarks in one of his books, "It is one of the compensations—indeed, the greatest of all—for the wastefulness, the woe, the cruel losses of war, that it causes, and indeed compels, a people to know itself a people; leading each one to esteem and prize most that which he has in common with his fellow-countrymen; and not now, any longer, those things which separate and divide him from them." And so it has been with us.

The characters in this book are drawn from life, and doubtless many of my companions in exile will recognize the portraits. The stories and incidents introduced are some of them true, some fictitious—I leave you, reader, to discriminate between the two, claiming only your kind forbearance; and, thanking you for following me thus far, I beg the privilege of introducing you to

### OUR HOUSEHOLD.

Our household gathered in the Queen's room this morning; but, before I relate what passed there, I must tell you of the Queen herself. She is a strange embodiment of wit, sense, generosity,

piety, and love of the world. A more singular mixture of worldliness and religion I have never seen. I think there must be some *rapproch* between us, for it seems she has the same opinion of my worldliness and religion that I have of hers. She said to me the other day, with *her* toss of the head, and in *her* peculiar tone, which paper can never convey, "For a pious woman, you have about as much mischief in you as anybody I know;" this, too, just after I had been reading morning service on Sunday, for we have no Episcopal Church here, and, when we wish to hear its comforting words, we meet together, and one reads the service for the benefit of all. The world, generally, does not appreciate our Queen justly, and because her style is magnificent, her dress, ditto, and, when one admires her grand toilette, she has a fashion of saying—"Do you think this handsome? It is not near as much so as one in which I will bedeck myself to-morrow." All of which is more a love of fun than any thing else. People call her a heartless, fashionable woman; but let those who call her so be domesticated with her, and I am sure they will change their opinion. A more devoted mother or wife, a person of a more generous disposition, a more equable temper, or a more pleasant home-companion, I have never met.

But, of course, you wish to know something of her appearance. She has a tall, commanding, and large, though perfectly symmetrical, figure; dark hair and eyes, the latter sufficiently *à la Chinois* to be mischievous; a nose that is neither one thing nor the other, but *piquant*; beautiful arms, hands, and feet; a quick, impulsive manner, with a peculiar toss of the head and a side glance of the eye when she says any thing witty—which is very often; and that's our Queen. She has great reverence for the Sabbath, and she would under no circumstances read a novel on that day, nor would she fail to read a chapter in the Bible before retiring at night, even if she had danced until a very late hour. Now, isn't our Queen an anomaly?

Well, it was in her room we met this morning, prepared, as usual, with material to make into soldiers' garments, with yarn to be knit into socks for them, and with old clothes of our own to be mended. By the by, Queen has no old clothes; she received a tremendous French trunk just before the blockade. And Queen proposed that, as we had a long winter before us, perchance a summer, too, before we could return to our homes, we should enliven a portion of that time by relating incidents in our own lives, or such as had come to our knowledge, and of whose authenticity we were

assured. We agreed, glad of any thing to change the monotony of our lives, and to divert our thoughts from the many gloomy ones that pressed upon us. Our household declared that, as Queen had started the proposition, she should be the first to begin the story-telling; but she said, "No, we must draw straws, and whoever draws the shortest straw must commence." So, amidst laughing and talking, she arranged the straws, and the shortest straw fell to our Pet. But, as Pet is one of our household, I must tell you about her before I tell you her story. Pet is one of the dearest little creatures in the world—in character, a mixture of joyousness and sadness—one that must be loved all the time to be happy. She has eyes as *bo opis* as Juno's; fair skin, though her eyes and hair are dark; an expressive, intelligent, sweet face, without much beauty, though those that love her call her beautiful. She is one who grows upon our hearts daily, from her gentleness, piety, and loveliness—hence her name, "Our Pet." Well, the shortest straw fell to Pet, and she related to us, with great earnestness—earnestness is one of Pet's traits--the following singular story.

## PETS' STORY;

OR,

THE MARBLE SLAB.

---

SHORTLY after my marriage, I was boarding at the St. Louis Hotel, in New Orleans. My sister, who was also there, had a very ill child, so ill that watchers were required for it every night. It was the second night of my watch, for my sister would only consent to leave the child in my charge when she was not with it herself, and I had persisted in being allowed to sit up again, and upon her retiring, for she was not only exhausted with anxiety concerning her sick child, but also with the care of a very young infant.

It was twelve o'clock when I gave the child her medicine, which she was to take at intervals of three hours. I then wrapped myself in a dressing-gown, and seated myself in a large arm-chair by a marble table, and beneath a bright light, from which I managed to shade the bed of the sick child.

I placed my watch upon the table, that I might be sure to administer the next dose of medicine at the proper time, and then, in order to keep myself awake, and to while away the long hours of the night, I opened a new publication, recommended to me as of much interest, and commenced its perusal.

Whether the book did not meet my expectations, or the fatigue of watching prevented my appreciating it, or Somnus waved over my head the branch moistened in Lethean dew, so fatal to Palanurus of old, I cannot say; I only know that my head gradually inclined toward the table, and rested there, my ear being in direct contact with the marble, while I unconsciously fell asleep.

I do not know how long I had been sleeping, when it appeared to me that the slab upon which I rested spoke, as with the voice of a human being, though in a low, mysterious tone, as if fearful its words would reach other ears than mine.

"Listen, listen," it seemed to say. "Oh, how long have I wished to impart to some one a fearful secret that I hold within myself—the secret of a tragedy enacted in this very room, by this very table, in the very chair in which you now sit.

"Listen, let me collect all the facts, for perhaps another opportunity may never occur for me to disclose them. Listen, until I recall all."

The voice from the marble paused for a moment, and then resumed.

"About eight years since, these rooms were newly fitted up for an expected bridal couple. I heard this spoken of by many who were employed to put them in order.

"I remember well the evening that the couple arrived, and the touch of the bride's soft white hand upon the marble on which you now are resting.

"Have you ever read of the peculiar hair of Lucretia Borgia? This lovely bride's was like it, each hair a thread of shining gold. Her eyes were large and blue, with the inquiring expression in them that is often seen in young children—children who die young. I knew it betokened innocence. In truth, she was beautiful with a beauty seldom seen on earth.

"Her husband was a tall, dark, handsome, but gloomy looking man, and when he, too, placed his hand upon the table, I felt an instinctive dread and horror thrill through me.

"How little persons suppose that the inanimate objects around them are ever cognizant of their

actions! They often quote, too, the much used words:—

‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy,’

and yet they never dream of this, that mind is ever compassed in inanimate matter. Does not the spirit of the chaste Daphne still whisper mid the rustling leaves of the laurel, and the motherly Dryope still sigh in the umbrage of the lotus?

“It is seldom that we inanimate spirits are placed in the proper juxtaposition to hold converse with you animated ones of the earth, but to-night certain circumstances have placed your mind and mine in that position, and I have a fearful tale to tell.

“Cold, and hard, and implacable as I seem, I became deeply attached to the golden-haired bride. The life and joy of her soul illumined not only her fair face, but all her words and actions.

“Outside her window hung her canary-bird. She would carol to it, amidst her feminine occupations, half the day, with a smile upon her face as pure as a seraph’s. With the same smile would she greet her gloomy husband. I often wondered that so much brightness could live under the influence of so much gloom; but even



as a diamond will reflect the glory of its Maker in the darkest cavern, if but one tiny ray of light touch it, so gleamed her pure spirit.

“Often her fairy fingers brought exquisite music from a piano, which has since been removed from the room. Her husband was fond of artistic music, and she perfected herself in it for his sake; but I loved best to hear her sing simple ballads, and, more than all, ‘Home, sweet home,’ which she never sang without tears in her voice and eyes—and by this, and by the letters she received and read aloud, I knew she had left a home blessed by the affection of a mother, a sister, and a brother.

“Her husband, for whom I still continued to have a horror and dislike, never was with her except at their meals, and after ten o’clock at night, at which times he held but little conversation with her: and, after she had entertained him by performing some of his favorite sonatas, he would take up a book, and be so engrossed in it that apparently he did not remember she was in the room. She would make various attempts to draw him into conversation, but, failing to do so, she would at last follow his example, or retire to the room beyond, where, in a simple night-dress, her long hair falling like a shower

of sunbeams around her, her hands clasped, and her eyes raised in prayer, she seemed indeed an angel in all save the wings.

"This child of light and beauty, who seemed always to have 'a sense of spring-time' in her heart, was devoted to her husband. I could not divine it—the one so bright, the other so dark. Perhaps it was because she did not understand him. We often worship what is incomprehensible—for instance, God. She, in childlike faith, adored her husband, unintelligible as he was to her. I think, at times, she had a yearning for more expressive tenderness, but she was too innocent to pine for it.

"They often went out to the opera and the entertainments of their fashionable friends, of whom they had many. She came from all such places as radiant and as childishly joyous as ever—contact with the world did not mar her whiteness of spirit.

"Visitors, too, came frequently to these rooms to see her, and all seemed charmed with her beauty and innocence. The most frequent among them was a handsome, fashionably dressed woman, with a superb figure and majestic carriage. Though not *passé* in appearance, she was at least thirty years of age. Her hair was deep auburn, her eyes

black, with a peculiar velvety softness, under which seemed to cower hidden fires. Take away the velvety softness, and they were the eyes of a fiend.

"I feared for the beautiful bride when I saw those eyes rest upon her, and I would have given worlds for the power of human speech, to have warned the lovely creature against their possessor.

"Once, this magnificent, dark woman was in the room when the husband entered. I saw a look pass between them. From that time forth I feared the more for the sweet being whom the gloomy man called wife.

"Alas! alas! my fears were not unfounded. Why this man married his wife, instead of her who evidently possessed his soul, I know not—this is a portion of the tragedy that others must unfold. I only know the fearful sequel, and let me come to it ere the time appointed for my converse with you expires.

"That innocent bride was murdered, foully murdered—whether another beside the husband was implicated by a knowledge of it, I cannot say. I am only aware of the fact of the murder, and that it was done by him.

"The day of the night upon which the diabolical

deed was perpetrated, she had received a letter from her sister, and in it was a request for a very full tress of her hair, to be woven into a bracelet. After reading the letter, she arose from her chair, and, standing before yonder mirror, she loosened the comb from her hair, and let it fall. She then clipped from it the desired lock, and, in order to flatten its bulk, she placed it in an envelope, and put it beneath the marble upon which you rest. There you will find it still, to testify for her, as strangely as the cranes of Ibycus testified for him.

"She was dressed very simply, in a black silk dress with white collar and cuffs.

"When her husband entered, she was complaining of a slight headache; to this he paid more than ordinary attention, and earnestly recommended a slight inhalation of chloroform. Fiend! he was a man of science, and knew her temperament well, and that it needed but a few inhalations of that potent agent to render her insensible.

"She acceded to his request, and held a small vial of the liquid to her mouth. She sank almost instantly into an infant-like slumber, but still the husband continued to hold the vial to her mouth.

"After a few moments he crossed the room, and

from behind the picture upon the mantelpiece he produced a larger vial of the same soporific mixture; with this he saturated a handkerchief, and, holding it to her open lips, he continued to place her under its effects, until her condition was almost that of death.

"It needed now but to compress her slender throat, with his strong hands, to render her state actually that which it appeared; and this that dark, evil man did, until his victim sat before him a blackened corpse.

"But oh! the glory—the inexpressible glory, that surrounded her pure soul, as soon as life was extinct, human words can never tell. That soul departed instantly from its bodily tenement; from that body rose an aeriform body—the earthly body's counterpart, feature by feature, hair by hair, limb by limb, but so glorious that earthly eyes could not behold it. For an instant this aeriform body hovered over its humanity—there was a rustling as of the wings of many angels—a sound of distant music—and it was gone.

"The murderer saw and heard nothing of this; he saw only the corpse that sat before him.

"Every thing had been well planned. As soon as he saw his work was complete, he destroyed the larger vial of chloroform, leaving the smaller

on the table; then he rang the bell for a servant, and told him that madam not feeling well, he had determined to take her over the lake for a few days, and he wished a carriage to be in readiness to convey them to the lake boat, which would leave the wharf about daybreak. Three o'clock was the hour he ordered the carriage.

"Locking the door, he then proceeded to array the corpse for the journey.

"I have mentioned the fact of her being already dressed plainly. He added a mantle to her shoulders, a bonnet to her head, and over the bonnet and face pinned a thick brown veil, put gloves upon the hands, in which he placed a small leather travelling bag, and then crossed the hands naturally at her waist.

"It was now about twelve o'clock—all was arranged, even to his own travelling appurtenances, and the murderer sat awaiting the announcement of the carriage. Strange to say, his brow was no longer gloomy and forbidding; and once he took a picture of the dark lady from his bosom and pressed it to his lips, murmuring words of passionate love. What passed in the heart of that fearful man it was not given me to know, but I heard the laughter of fiends around him, and mephitic vapors enveloped him, though he appeared

neither to hear the laughter nor feel the poisoned atmosphere.

"Three o'clock came, and the waiter knocked to say the carriage was ready. The murderer arose and told him to bring another waiter; that madam felt too faint to walk; and that with assistance she could be conveyed in the arm-chair to the carriage; that when at the carriage he himself would lift her in.

"All was done as the fiend desired. I saw the beauteous form borne past me, listened until I heard the wheels of the carriage roll away, and knew that she had gone from my sight forever.

"The waiters came back, bringing the chair, put out the lights, and I was left alone, to ponder on the terrible sin I had witnessed. I could but grieve for the untimely earthly end of this beautiful child of nature, even though I had seen her spirit borne upward on the wings of angels.

"The second day from this, two servants were arranging and cleaning the rooms, when a third entered with a horrified expression, telling them that the lovely occupant would return no more; that she had been *accidentally drowned* by falling from the guards of the boat, on the same morning that she left the hotel, and that her body had not yet been recovered.

"Her husband," continued the marble—but here, said Pet, I was aroused from my slumbers by a cry from my sick charge.

I started, bewildered, frightened, and unconscious where I was, until my eye caught sight of my watch upon the table—then I remembered the child, and, looking closer at the watch, I discovered it was the exact time for the medicine to be administered.

Mechanically I gave it to the little sufferer, and, after a few restless turns on her bed, she sank into a heavy slumber.

But for me there was no more sleep; my brain was in a weird state of excitement. When I looked at the marble table, a cold tremor took possession of me—I longed for morning—I longed for company, and waked the negro woman sleeping at my feet. I felt that words of fearful import had been whispered in my ear by that inanimate table, and that they were pregnant with truth.

Morning came at last. Oh! how thankfully I welcomed its beams. But even in its broad light I could not believe that the revelation of my sleep was only a dream.

The first opportunity I had, unobserved by others, I lifted the marble slab from the wood-work of the table, and beneath it, crumpled and crushed and



mildewed by time, I found, in truth, a folded paper, containing a long lock of soft, glittering hair.

I had told my husband my dream, and he had tried to laugh me out of the idea of its being a shadow of a reality; but when I found the hair, and showed it to him, he made me repeat to him, word for word, what I had previously told him, and that which I have just related to you. He then, without telling any one his reasons, made inquiries of the proprietor of the hotel, and also of others attached to it, concerning the persons who occupied the rooms at the time specified in my dream; but since that period the hotel had changed hands several times—some of the lessees were dead, others did not remember, and it was impossible to discover any thing in relation to the matter.

We also looked up and examined old newspapers, thinking we might meet with some account of an accidental drowning, but it was of no avail; we found nothing.

There still remained, however, that lock of hair—I have it yet—an almost speaking evidence, I might say, of the truth of the communication vouchsafed me by the unknown power in that singular table. I intend always to keep this lock of hair; I may yet be able to place it in the hands of those for whom its lovely owner intend-

ed it, and be the means of bringing to light a horrible murder.

At first I was very nervous about remaining in the rooms where this singular revelation was made to me; but afterwards, when I thought of the beauty and purity of character ascribed to the golden-haired bride, and of the seraphic angels that bore her from the very spot, I concluded to keep them.

As for the strange table, it seemed almost human to me, and I determined never to part with it. When we left the hotel, I bought it, and always kept it in my room, with my religious books upon it, and I had a feeling that I would like that marble to mark my last resting-place.

When we lost our home, the table was lost too; where it is I have no idea, but if I can ever identify it, I shall earnestly beseech its possessor to restore it to me.

We gazed, with horror in our hearts and on our faces, when Pet finished this story. Had we not known her character for veracity, we would have believed she had fabricated it for our amusement. She saw our amazement, and, rising, went into her room; and, returning in a few moments, she opened a small box, and held up to our view a lock of the most beautiful golden hair, which

all declared to be the most beautiful they had ever seen. This, she assured us, was the identical hair found by her under the marble slab. At first we rather shrank from it as something weird and unnatural, but this displeased Pet, who believed implicitly in its having belonged to the lovely creature described in her dream. She actually looked upon it with a reverential awe.

Venetia, the young lady of our household, and of whom I will tell you presently, after her first ejaculations of horror over Pet's story, entered upon a long dissertation of mysticism generally, beginning with mythology and ending with mesmerism.

For her part, she was sorry that "science grave" had "scattered afar" all the "sweet imaginings" of old, the

—— "delicious fables, where the wave  
And woods were peopled, and the air, with things  
So lovely."——

"Old paganism, you know," she continued, "attributed deity to every thing in nature, but the most of us Christians can only worship God by a prescribed rule or creed. To many of us, a sweeping torrent, a majestic mountain, a silvery cascade, a flowery dell, or even the wild beauty of a storm, are nothing more than what we call

them by name—they do not speak to us of deity. Would not our hearts be better, if we mingled some of the old Pagan doctrine with our own?

“Mythology should become more a part of female education. The male generation gets a smattering of it at school and college, the female seldom or never even gets that smattering. It would make us all more poetic, less earthly, less matter of fact. What do you think, Pet?” she suddenly inquired.

“I think,” said Pet, “that it brings us nearer to God to poetize our lives. A seat in a pleasant spot, where the ever-moving drama of nature meets my eye, or the notes of innocent birds and winds whispering through ‘earth’s æolian’ meet my ear—these lull me to contentment, while my whole soul is exalted to thoughts of a higher sphere.”

“Do those,” said Venetia, “understand the true aim of life, who only eat, drink, rise up, and lie down, who do not make poetry in their daily lives? Do they understand the design of God in creating this beautiful earth? Will they occupy a sphere hereafter with those who are ever drinking religious draughts from the great cup of nature?”

“Christ died for all alike,” said Pet.

"I know," said Venetia; "but such thoughts will present themselves to a thoughtful mind. We ought to study to poetize our minds; and poetry, and mythology, and the varied beauties of nature ought to be made the subject of conversation oftener than they are. However, I suppose it would seem very ridiculous and pedantic, in these go-ahead times, to be gossiping about fauns and naiads and other creatures of mythological lore. By the by, Pet, you who unconsciously admit all sorts of mysticisms into your heart, what do you think of mesmerism?"

"I think," said Pet, very solemnly, "that God, who is so good, seeing us with little faith regarding a spiritual state, has just allowed us to catch a glimpse through this *ism* of the great connecting link between the spiritual and the physical. It appears to me that, had He intended we should be further enlightened in it, He would by this time have made fuller developments. I used to think that mesmerism was in its infancy—that it would creep, then walk, and then stride with the steps of a giant—but I was wrong. I feel sure we shall never know any thing more of it in our present condition."

Here Queen interrupted the conversation, declaring that she put a veto upon all mystical sub-

jects, and also upon any more stories as horrible as Pet's.

Pet smiled, and promised to ignore them in future; but I think Pet's mind runs in a melancholy channel—her songs are never gay. We all weep, even Queen, when she sings her simple, touching ballads, and we often find her alone, with traces of tears on her sweet face.

It was Venetia's turn to tell the next story, but the dinner-bell rang, and we started up at the sound, folded our work, put aside our knitting, arranged for a game of euchre after dinner, and went to our rooms.

Several of our friends arrived the following day, and remained a week, so it was some time before Venetia had an opportunity to fulfil her engagement. Let me describe Venetia to you.

She is original and intelligent, loath to make friendships suddenly, true in them when made, womanly in instinct, but masculine in mind, a true woman, though a peculiar one.

She is the only unmarried lady in our household; there are many among the refugees here, and some very interesting ones. I do not think Venetia will ever marry. Few men would appreciate such a woman, and she cannot find her ideal—she has placed him too high in the clouds. She

is charming in *tête-à-tête*, and a most desirable accession to a dinner-table—few persons are good dinner-talkers.

Conversation where she is never flags, never becomes commonplace.

She is tall, with dark hair and eyes; fine looking, but not beautiful. She travelled a summer in Europe, and saw more, and *appreciated* more, in that time, than ordinary persons would in as many years.

Her criticisms on works of art and books are original and just, and we each of us naturally await her verdict on all the new publications that chance to reach us in our isolation.

Venetia does not know how to sew, not even to hem a pocket handkerchief—this is all I have against her. Alas! this war will teach her.

I think she has a deep reverence for religion, though, unlike Queen, she would not object to an interesting novel on Sunday, especially in our present situation. She loves nature, and feels all the gleams that come from the floating clouds, the skies, the trees, and rippling, sparkling rills.

Well, it was in her room we met, on a bright autumnal morning, with our accompaniments of home-spun, *et cætera*—she, as usual, being unemployed—to await the promised story

"*Eh bien!*" she exclaimed, with a shrug of her shoulders. "I am delighted to receive you, but—indeed—I can never relate a story. Give me no task, and I can go on at random, and finally, perchance, end with something to interest you; but to sit down deliberately, in a business way, to tell a story, I cannot do it."

"But," said sister Maddie—sister Maddie is one of our household—"we cannot certainly absolve you, our literary critic."

"Besides," resumed Venetia, "my thoughts have been so sadly fixed on my lost home this morning, that I feel unfitted for the task. Oh! our home was so beautiful—so beautiful! how I wish we were all there this morning. Pet, I declare, if we ever get our home back, you must stay with me half the time. I could entertain you all well, if we were there. We have so many sources of pleasure—so many beautiful things, too, that we brought from Europe. In my own room I had such treasures of pictures and statuary. There was one picture I loved so much, I always sat in contemplation before it when a saddened mood crossed me, but that was seldom, in my dear lost home.

"We have heard that the place has been sacked, and that the enemy have sent our home treasures—



endeared, oh! by so many associations—north. Do you think it can be so? I cannot believe they would so desecrate our private houses. I remember, when a child, studying a history written by some Northern man, in which an account was given of the inhuman conduct of the British in South Carolina during the Revolution, and also of that same nation's conduct in Washington City, in the war of 1812, and the historian's indignation at such barbarous conduct. Do you suppose, then, that these Northerners, who know so well what is just and right, have done to our homes what report says they have done? Do our pictures decorate their walls, our jewels bedeck their wives and children, our very garments clothe their bodies? Are they not afraid of some moral contagion, thus clothed? You may be sure these are fabrications that we hear—it cannot be possible that they have been so inhuman. I must and will believe that we will go back to our homes and find them unmolested. You doubt it; well, the future will show—*nous verrons.*

“I wonder who will take care of Alexis Averton's property during the war,” continued Venetia; “it is immense, and he is in Europe; he and his wife went there a year before the war, just after their marriage. Did I ever tell you any thing

about that marriage and courtship? It is really quite a romance, and I must relate it to you."

"Hush," said Queen, *sotto voce*, "she is going to tell us a story, and the charm of it is, she don't know it."

## VENETIA'S STORY;

OR,

ESTELLE.

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"I was Estelle's first bridesmaid and most intimate friend," said Venetia. "We were together in New Orleans two winters before the war, having both entered society at that time.

"Besides Estelle's father, who accompanied us from the plantation to the city, there was her cousin, Lawrence Maupay, and he who is now her husband, Alexis Averton.

"Lawrence and Estelle were apparently devoted to each other. She was very much admired that winter, not only for her beauty, but for her supposed wealth, consequently she was a great belle; but her mind was so absorbed in Lawrence that she had not even the imputation of flirting with any of her numerous admirers during the whole of that gay winter.

"As for Averton, he was double Estelle's age, of a haughty and extremely dignified appearance,

and Estelle looked upon him with awe—to tell you the truth, though, he was my *beau-idéal* of a man in intellect, in manners, and in appearance.

“His plantation joined that of Mr. Dayton—Estelle’s father—and the intimacy between the two gentlemen was great, though Mr. Dayton was a much older man than Alexis Averton.

“Mr. Dayton had married late in life, and Estelle was his only child, her mother having died at her birth.

“When Spring advanced, Estelle insisted that I should accompany her back to the plantation. Oh! how well I recall the merry trip we had on the boat going there. How brightly flowed the yellow waters of the noble river! how fragrant were the orange-scented groves on its banks! how full of elastic hope seemed life—now, how different!

“It was several days after our arrival at the plantation—I had noticed in the mean while how strangely care-worn Mr. Dayton had become—that one evening, as I sat reading on the piazza of the house, Estelle’s cousin, Lawrence, came toward me.

“He looked sadder than I ever believed he could look, for he had one of those playful, joyous dispositions, from which care ever seems to flee; and drawing his chair near me, he said:

“‘Miss Venetia, we often hear those lines of

Shakspeare, concerning "the course of true love," &c., &c., tritely used, but, my friend, I begin to think that mine and Estelle's has met with rocks we little expected or feared.

"Her father, to whom I went this morning with an avowal of my love for his daughter, hesitated; in fact, gave me no encouragement. It cannot be that he will not give Estelle to me, for has he not always loved me and treated me as his son? I do not like his hesitation, though. This waiting for time to consider—what does it bode? what am I to think? Estelle and I have looked upon ourselves as belonging to each other since her childhood. You are Estelle's friend; can you explain this matter?"

"I could not. I did not know what to think. In reality, I never had fancied Lawrence as a husband for Estelle, and would have preferred to see her marry almost any one else. He had not sufficient force of character to bring out Estelle's, as I knew it could and as it ought to be brought out.

"That night, at supper, Estelle's face bore the traces of tears, and Lawrence looked sadder than when he was speaking to me.

"Estelle retired directly after supper, and I, as soon as politeness would admit, followed her.

"Her room adjoined mine. I was not mistaken in thinking that she would come directly and tell me all her troubles.

"‘Oh!’ she exclaimed, entering and throwing her arms around me. ‘Oh! Venetia—Venetia—my heart is breaking!’

"Then she proceeded to tell me, that of late she had noticed her father's altered appearance, and her forebodings regarding the cause of it; how that day he had called her to his study, and told her that unless she married Alexis Averton he was a ruined man; that their beautiful home, their hundreds of servants—even those about the house—would have to be sold—sacrificed to strangers.

"‘Oh! Venetia,’ she said, ‘what shall I do? I cannot see my ease-loving, aristocratic father, who knows no way of supporting his declining years, reduced to penury. My poor dear father! Oh, Venetia, the tears trickled down his worn and furrowed cheek as he told me of his misfortune, and his desire that I should wed Alexis.

"‘He says that Alexis has long loved me, and, with himself, has only looked upon my affection for Lawrence as a childish pastime. He added, Alexis is noble—his soul is deep—he will cherish you, and love you with a love passing your understanding. I know this from his nature, and I have

known him long and well. Even had it not been for my pecuniary embarrassments, I had intended you for him, for he is the only man I know who will fulfil, to the letter, the mighty trust I place in him, in bestowing upon him my idolized child.

“ ‘Lawrence will not grieve,’ said my father; ‘his is not a nature to succumb to sorrow; he loves you more from habit than any thing else, and your love for him, my child, is not deep. You may think me wrong now, but in after years you will bless your father for urging upon you the hand of Alexis Averton.’

“ ‘And, Venetia,’ continued Estelle, ‘I have told my father I will consider the subject. I could not look upon the agitated face of my beloved parent and increase his sorrow; he seemed so distressed, so infirm, so almost helpless; it wrung and still wrings my heart to think of his extreme agitation.’

“The next day Estelle did not leave her room. A farewell note brought by her father was all she knew of Lawrence, who, advised by him, had left for the city.

“I saw him just before he left. He did not blame Estelle for the course she was pursuing; he was sad and rather *distrain*, but two weeks afterwards both Estelle and myself heard of his particu-

lar attentions to a certain beauty in New Orleans, one, too, known to be of great wealth. A week afterwards, Estelle received the addresses of Alexis Averton.

"I need not recount to you the formality of the courtship, during the six weeks' engagement, for, from what I have said of Alexis's peculiar manner and Estelle's awe of him, you can well imagine it. Suffice it to say, he was never in her company except in the presence of others, and a kiss upon her brow, in a fatherly way, was the extent of his affectionate demonstration.

"I felt sorry, very sorry for Estelle, for hers was an affectionate, demonstrative nature, and she was constantly in such awe of him that she was miserable in his presence. She could not help admiring him, however, for he was all I have described him, and, added to this, he possessed one of the most melodious voices I have ever listened to. The melody must have come from an harmonious soul.

"Well, they were married, and started immediately for Europe, where they have been ever since. We kept up a constant correspondence until the beginning of the war, in which she related to me her heart's history. If she were not now one of the happiest wives the sun ever



blessed, I would not recount it to you, for really her life at first with her husband was so uncongenial, I feared a separation would ensue.

"Her letters are interesting, and will tell her story much better than I can, so I will read portions of them to you."

Venetia, as she said the last words, drew a prettily inlaid box towards her, and, selecting a package of letters from it, and opening one, she read as follows:—

"LONDON, —————, —, —.

"MY LOVED FRIEND:—

"Already many miles of the mysterious ocean lie between us, seeming to raise up an impenetrable barrier. Yet I feel there lies in my heart, 'full many a fathom deep,' an electric cable, more sure, more lasting, more true than that of ocean memory, which holds me to you, for it is sympathy linked with the purest friendship, and where these links are welded together, they not only resist the billows of time, but extend into eternity.

"I suppose it is hardly time for me to receive your second letter, though I yearn to do so, and to hear not only of yourself, but also about my dear blessed father, and my home. You must go

often to see him, Venetia, that he need not miss me so much. I am so thankful he is happy and contented, and that every thing on the plantation is going on so prosperously.

"Tell me particularly about Mauma Dinah when you write. See that she has every thing for her comfort, and tell her her 'chile' longs to see her dear old black face. Tell—but here I am writing of home when I know you are longing to know only about me and my travels; but in thoughts of my ever dear Louisiana home, I forget all else. *Excusez-moi, ma chère*, and I will do better.

"We landed in Liverpool on the 6th, and remained there but one night, coming directly through to this place. We have already met with many friends, and some of them have shown us marked attention.

"Alexis, you know, was in Europe several years since, when I was a child, as *attaché* to one of our legations. That, and his great wealth, gave him the *entrée* to the highest circles. I think our stay here will be pleasant—that is, as far as the outer life is concerned. But, Venetia, my life with Alexis can never be a happy one. I am not, nor can I ever be, natural in his presence.

"He is always most devoted and attentive to

my wants and wishes, and directly after our marriage, after leaving you, there was such gentle affection in his manner to me, that my heart was almost won; but on the steamer—shall I tell it?—I gave way to one of my childish, passionate ebullitions—you know what they are, Venetia, and how penitent I always have been after them—and in that ebullition I told him I had never loved him, but only married him for convenience.

“Oh! Venetia, after I had said it, I could have cut my tongue from my throat for its unruliness. Alexis has never been any thing to me since but the dignified, austere man I knew as a girl.

“His face, at my words, became livid with agitation, and I, oh! had I not been in such awe of him, I could have thrown myself at his feet for pardon, at the sight of his evident suffering.

“‘Estelle,’ he said, ‘you should not have deceived me thus. You should have told me this before it was too late. God knows I never would have sacrificed you to a loveless marriage. I have loved you from childhood, devotedly at first, then, as you advanced to maidenhood, with a deep and passionate love; but, my child, henceforth that love shall never trouble you. Still I have a duty to perform, in fulfilling the promise I made, not only before God, but to your father,

to cherish you through life. Should your heart ever need my love, call for it; it shall come forth at your bidding. Otherwise, it shall only be your protection. In doing my duty strictly, you may yet learn to have for me a child's affection for a parent.'

"He attempted to say more, but, as if sorry for even this exhibition of feeling, he left me abruptly, since which time no words but those of necessity have passed between us.

"Oh! Venetia, what have I done, what shall I do? Would you were here to counsel me. Can love, such as Alexis seems to have, exist in his cold, stern nature? Have I mistaken him? am I not capable of penetrating this 'still water,' which perhaps 'runs deep?'"

The bell for dinner rang as Venetia finished the above extract. We therefore adjourned, she promising to resume reading Estelle's letters the next day.

Accordingly, we met in her room, and she, after remarking that there were only some local observations of London in the remainder of the letter she had read the day before, took from her box the one next in date, and, skipping the first page, read the following:

"A slight sickness has prevented my doing as much in the way of sight-seeing as I had expected. In fact, for several days I have been obliged to remain in my room, and Alexis has insisted, with his usual pertinacity, on sending for a physician, who merely said, what I knew myself, that I needed rest and quiet. Could he have ministered to a mind diseased, he might have added, that I was weary—wearily for sympathy and companionship. Oh! these doctors—with their owlish looks and nods—they never see the many sarcastic smiles hid in the friendly pillow.

"Alexis was assiduous in his attentions, coming to my room many times during the day and night, for fear Tenette, my maid, would not be watchful enough—still playing the fatherly, you see, and this was done so methodically, as a duty. I was nervous, and it nearly wrought me to desperation; at last I feigned sleep, that I need not be forced to answer his questions.

"While I was thus feigning, he came again. I heard Tenette say, 'Miss 'Stel sleep, Mars Alex,' and then I heard his firm footstep, as he approached my bed. Could it be possible he was leaning over me? I could feel his breath upon my cheek; I thought, at first, his lips would rest upon mine; but,

no, he only whispered, as if to himself, 'May God bless you, my child-wife!' and went away.

"Oh! how I wish I could unsay the unwomanly, ungentle words I spoke on the steamer. If Alexis would be less reserved, I could learn to love him."

"This is all that relates to the estrangement in this letter," said Venetia; "I will look over the one next in date, and see what it contains."

Then, after reading to herself for a few moments, she added: "The first part of the letter is a description of different objects of interest in London; only the latter part refers to herself and Alexis, and that I will read."

"You will ask, dear Venetia, where Alexis is, in all my visits to different places! I answer, ever at my side, as cold, as distant as ever; but, nevertheless, I find in his cultivated mind and taste a great source of enjoyment.

"I seldom leave my room before mid-day. How Alexis passes the early portion of it I know not. I only know that I never return from my visits or drives, at which time he is always with me, that I do not find on my toilette, with the most exquisite flowers, some new book, an engraving, or

article of *vertu*, and usually it is something I have admired the day before.

"Sometimes I feel so grateful to him for his devotion, that I am on the point of throwing my arms about his neck, and thanking him, as I used to thank my dear father, for his gifts, but his cold manner prevents me.

"We often have for our companions a Miss Rosetrevor, and her brother, Major Rosetrevor, of the Guards. They are people of great wealth and position, and old friends of my husband. They have invited us to pass a month with them at their country residence, not many miles from the city.

"I am told that this country-seat is a grand and beautiful place. A portion of the mansion is very antiquated, in fact, in ruins, which has been left so on account of their picturesque appearance.

"Miss Rosetrevor and her brother often join us on our sight-seeing expeditions; but, though they are agreeable companions, I much prefer to go to places of interest alone with Alexis, for then I am not obliged to fritter away my time in frivolous conversation.

"Alexis never interrupts me when I get into one of my enthusiastic trances, and intuitively he

appears to know when to speak, and when to relate some legend or historical fact connected with what we are visiting.

"His mind is wonderfully stored. Miss Rosetrevor seems to find him extremely fascinating, and, I think, courts his society in rather a free manner.

"I am interrupted by a call from her ladyship now. So, *au revoir*."

"The next letter," said Venetia, "is dated from Miss Rosetrevor's country-seat. After a few preliminary remarks, Estelle says:—

"We arrived here about two weeks since, in company with Miss Rosetrevor and her brother, and were received cordially by the other members of the family, consisting of a younger sister, Miss Lucy Rosetrevor, and a widowed aunt.

"The property, which is magnificent, belongs entirely to the elder Miss Rosetrevor, having been purchased by her out of an immense fortune left her by an uncle.

"It is a grand, fascinating old place. You will laugh at the word 'fascinating,' and say, 'Estelle has still her school-girl fancy for antiquated houses.' Even so, my friend. And in my imagination—and



in that only, I trust—they are still peopled with all the ghostly horrors and thrilling incidents so frequently ascribed to them by the old-fashioned novelists.

“My own apartments are situated in the modern portion of the buildings; but even this is different from any thing we have in Louisiana.

“The loftiness and massiveness of the rooms at first impressed me gloomily; but, now that I am more used to them, that impression is leaving me. At any rate, if I wish for a more cheerful scene, all I have to do is to look out of my oriole window, and I behold one of the most beautiful parks imaginable.

“Picture to yourself the most gracefully undulating slopes of ground, covered with the greenest and smoothest verdure, dotted here and there with gnarled oaks, such as surround Windsor Castle, and which so often, in days of old, befriended wild Herne the Hunter in his midnight gambols. Here, too, can be seen glittering fountains, artificial lakes, pavilions of Grecian proportions, and, lastly, a something I call my Feast of Roses.

“This ‘Feast of Roses’ is a mound in the centre of the park, of sixty feet square—just at the foot of the marble steps leading to the grand

entrance—which is covered with a hundred different varieties of roses.

“The centre ones are of the deepest red, and from that they are shaded down through the various hues of lighter red and pink, until the outer border is composed of white ones entirely.

“The little paths between each variety are so narrow that from my window they cannot be perceived; so you can imagine how luxurious is the effect.

“The ancient portion of the house is seldom used. However, this week it will be put in requisition, for over a hundred guests are expected, and a grand ball is to be given.

“Yesterday, in company with Miss Lucy Rose-trevor, we traversed all of the older portion of the building, even to the haunted chamber, where it is said that, two hundred years ago, an ancestress of the family from whom Miss Rosetrevor purchased the place was cruelly murdered by her lover.

“Broad daylight as it was, I trembled violently when we entered this room, and clung to Alexis's arm, until he placed it about me, holding me thus until we left the stifling place, and I fancied, but probably it was only fancy, that his words and looks were more than fatherly—almost lover-like.

"In the picture-gallery hang many portraits of the ancestors of the former owners, and among them one of the ill-fated lady of the haunted chamber. She is depicted as a young, laughing creature, and the picture leaves a pleasant impression, difficult to associate with her terrible end.

"There was one very quaint picture in the gallery, which on inquiry I found to be the likeness of a celebrated harlequin, who had once preserved his lord's life—so the family preserved his portrait.

"We stopped before it, making comments, when quite a discussion arose as to the wisdom of our forefathers, in permitting these licensed buffoons to interfere with not only their trivial everyday conversations, but even in more important ones.

"We ended by agreeing with Alexis, who said that while at times the custom must have been annoying, it also must have had the effect of checking certain evils. For instance, he said, in these days our faults are constantly held up to us in public journals, and in the works of different authors; for example, in Dickens's and Thackeray's works; and those who are not too conceitedly blind to see themselves in these printed mirrors, can study to remedy their faults.

"In the days of court-fools, books were not so plentiful as now, and who shall say that the sharp-edged tongues of these jesters did not mow down many a social evil?

"The lofty, the arrogant might even in our own day be benefited by licensed foolery. Who does not fear the gentleman wit of society, who strikes about him right and left, aiming at society's weak points? who does not wish to merit his good opinion, to escape his sarcastic stroke?

"Who but Pace, Queen Elizabeth's jester, would have dared rebuke her, as he sometimes did; for instance, when she said to him, 'Come, Pace, let us hear of our faults,' he replied, 'What is the use of speaking of what all the town is talking?' Think you not that she was benefited by such an answer?

"By the by, there is a room in the ancient portion of this mansion, said to have once been occupied by the Virgin Queen, the windows of which are so deep-set that they form almost rooms by themselves; of course, I ensconced myself in each one, thinking that perhaps in the same spot the wise Elizabeth had seated herself and pondered—of what!

"I am much more at my ease here than I expected. In fact, none need make their appearance to be agreeable to others—unless they wish—until

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the dinner-hour; then *easydom* merges into formality.

"Until the dinner-hour, when I do not drive, I usually remain in my apartments; and ever since the morning we visited the haunted chamber, Alexis says I am nervous, and passes these early hours with me, reading our favorite authors, while I either employ my hands with some fancy-work, or recline on a couch by the window, where every now and then I can look out at my Feast of Roses.

"The tones of Alexis's voice are fine for reading; it is strange I never noticed its melodiousness before; then, too, he reads with so much pathos, particularly poems of the Tennysonian School. I often weep over passages, as he renders them, that I never noticed before.

"Miss Rosetrevor and the Major accompany us in our drives—the Major riding a spirited horse. Sometimes Alexis takes the Major's horse, and he the seat in the carriage. I cannot say I like this; for, at times, the Major looks at me so strangely—almost as Lawrence used to look.

"Miss Rosetrevor is evidently very fond of the society of Alexis, and sometimes he appears so much pleased with her, that I believe he forgets I am in the room. They breakfast together, too, every morning. To-day, he was an hour later in coming

to read to me—perhaps soon he will not come at all.

“After dinner, we of course go to the drawing-room, where the gentlemen join us after finishing their wine. I thought to-night that the Major had truly finished his; for, on entering the parlor, his manner to me was so peculiar that Alexis said to him: ‘Did you mistake my wife for your sister, Major Rosetrevor?’

“We were looking over Miss Rosetrevor’s drawings at the moment. She sketches well, and her crayon drawings are really very fine. She says she envies me my voice, and often compliments me on my rendition of opera music.

“Alexis and myself sang to-night some of the duets that you of old were so fond of. His voice was thrillingly pathetic, and I felt my whole being tremble and quiver under its soul-like melody.

“The ancients placed music among their healing arts—was it not because it affects the soul so searchingly; and the soul, thus soothed, restored the body? Whatever may be the reason, I am always better, body and soul, after listening to fine music, and especially to that of Alexis’s voice.”

The disagreeable dinner-bell, as Queen calls it, interrupted Venetia’s reading, and it was several

days before our curiosity was satisfied regarding Estelle, in whom we began to feel great interest; when we met, Venetia continued her reading from the second letter, dated from Miss Rosetrevor's residence:—

“This morning I arose earlier than usual, thinking I would surprise Alexis by taking breakfast with him; when, on going to my window to look out, I saw him riding away, in company with Miss Rosetrevor. I saw him glance toward my window.

“Did he suppose *his child* was watching him? No, indeed; he can ride, I am sure, when and with whom he pleases. No doubt, he thinks me still sleeping, I said to myself, and that I know nothing of these morning flirtations! This, and much more that was equally foolish, passed through my mind; and then I impetuously determined that I would ride, too, notwithstanding his express desire for me never to venture on horseback unless attended by himself.

“So, sending Tenette to tell Miss Lucy Rosetrevor—who I knew rode every morning with a groom—that I would join her, I arrayed myself for my ride, and in a few moments joined her at the entrance where the horses awaited their riders.

“We started, and for a while we cantered along

smoothly and refreshingly; but I could feel that my nervousness was conveying itself to my spirited little pony. Suddenly he pricked up his ears, snuffed the air, and started off at a full run. Earth, sky, trees, and grass, all seemed mingled in one rushing mass; how I kept my seat, I know not. Notwithstanding my fright, I perceived two riders in the distance, and my heart told me they were Alexis and Miss Rosetrevor. The pony reached and passed the riders. I heard Alexis exclaim, as I was carried swiftly by him:

“‘Great heavens! it is Estelle!’

“I heard the clatter of his horse’s feet behind me, and I feared for a moment that the noise would add new impetus to my own steed. But no; Alexis had thought of this; and, as soon as he was near enough, he commenced soothing the excited animal, by a low, modulated tone, which made him slacken his pace to a fast walk, and finally to so slow a one that Alexis came near enough to control him.

“Alexis did not speak a word, but there was a strange look upon his frightfully white face—it was a blended look of thankfulness, tenderness, and anger, which touched me to the heart; but the others coming up, I was Estelle, the wayward, again.

“I had wished for a ride—why should I not take it? My husband was not there to go with me; the



groom was trusty; Miss Lucy went with him every morning—why could not I?

“Thus I thought, Venetia, after all my danger! Am I not far from being a reasonable being?

“On our arrival at the house, Alexis, after assisting me to alight, accompanied me to my room. On entering it, he spoke for the first time.

“‘Estelle,’ he said, ‘never repeat this morning’s feat. I have so often heard you express your dislike for horseback exercise, that I have never offered to accompany you in it. If you wish to ride, my child, I must be your attendant. I cannot risk you with any one else. I have ridden several mornings with Miss Rosetrevor, at her request. I will call Tenette—you must lie down, and quiet your excited nerves.’

“Thus he spoke, while untying my hat ribbons, and loosening the top and bottom buttons of my habit, for I was too exhausted for even that exertion, and then, Tenette not instantly making her appearance, he stepped into my bedroom, and returned with a napkin and water, with which he bathed my head as I lay on the couch, where he had placed me.

“I took his hand, his large but beautifully formed hand, and pressed it fondly to my lips. I could have cried from my heart at that moment,

'Oh, Alexis! I call for your love, as you bade me, when I should need it' — but Tenette came in, and he, after giving her some directions about my being quiet, retired.

"There are two things that I have decided on, Venetia, and they are, to ride and breakfast with Alexis every morning. The first will benefit my health, and it is more seemly to breakfast with my husband."

"Now I proceed," said Venetia, as she closed the letter containing the above, "to read from the third letter, dated from Miss Rosetrevor's residence, and which gives a description of a ball, that is rather tantalizing to think of in these days of meagre houses, meagre furniture, and meagre wardrobes. If it were not for the one thought, and that *the glorious cause*, I don't think I could bear it."

#### THE BALL.

"I am sure, if I try my best, Venetia, I can never, by letter, describe with justice the magnificent ball that Miss Rosetrevor gave us last week.

"Long before the arrival of the guests, Lucy Rosetrevor and I rambled all over the rooms, to look at them.

"The ball-room was of immense extent, painted in fresco overhead, the side panels being covered with paintings, also, of colossal figures, representing different scenes from mythology. At one end of this superb room was a fountain of perfumed water, throwing its jets some twenty feet high, and then falling into a pure white marble basin. The chandelier above it, casting its light through globes of varied hues, made each drop of water appear like a dancing gem.

"Diverging from this room were others, hung in draperies of different colored silks; some in blue, some in pink—one in gold lama, another in crimson and silver lama, and one in white silk, beautifully wreathed with flowers and evergreens. Imagine these rooms brilliantly illuminated with gas and hundreds of wax tapers, and you can form some idea of the magnificent effect produced.

"In each of these rooms were fantastic little *buffets*, holding ices, sherbets, cooling drinks, *bonbons*, &c., very much in the same style as you have seen them in New Orleans.

"The supper-table—as Tenette expressed it—was all gold and glass and flowers; but, from other accounts, its viands were French and bountiful. I dislike crowded suppers, and did not go

in, but contented myself with an occasional ico from the flower-embowered, fairy-like *buffets*.

"I had nearly forgotten to mention an unrivalled conservatory, to the east of the ball-room, brilliant with its many-colored lights, odoriferous and rare flowers, and stuffed birds of gorgeous plumage, which were made to look as if flitting about.

"When I returned to my room, to array myself in robes befitting so grand an occasion, I was met by Tenette at my door, looking half wild with excitement, saying: 'Oh, Miss 'Stel! jes' look out ob your window, and I do jes' belieb you will see heaben!'

"It was not strange that Tenette's native imagination should have ascribed something supernatural to the scene below.

"The whole park was in a blaze of light—fountains, temples, and the trees, as far as the eye could reach;—the trees, being hung with globe-like transparencies, looked as if loaded down with some new and wonderful kind of fruit. 'Surely,' I said, 'I have rubbed Aladdin's lamp; this is not like reality.'

"The servants, to prevent accident, had been placed at intervals over the grounds, and, to heighten the effect of the scene, their livery had

been exchanged for costumes of every nation under the sun—Chinese, Indians, Scots, Africans—the latter in tight-fitting red garments—Greeks, Turks, Spaniards, and others. The servants on duty within the house retained their livery.

“I clapped my hands with delight, and fairly shouted, in my enthusiasm. You may imagine how ashamed I was of such childishness, when I turned and saw Alexis standing behind me, with a quiet, pleasant smile upon his face.

“‘I am glad you are pleased, Estelle,’ he said, ‘it is, indeed, a magnificent spectacle, worthy of comparison with, and perhaps resembling, that given in honor of his Queen, by my Lord of Leicester. But, fair lady,’ he added, ‘should you not be donning your own attire?’

“‘Oh,’ said I, quite naturally—forgetting, for once, my awe of my husband in my excitement—‘if I could only have a girlish ramble in the fairy park!’

“‘Dress quickly,’ he replied, ‘and you may have time to wander over it before the guests arrive. I will await you in the ante-room.’

“It was not long before Tenette’s nimble fingers had smoothed back my somewhat ruffled tresses, and looped them in graceful bows at the back of my head. I must not forget to tell you

that, the day before, Alexis had left on my dressing-table a beautiful set of diamonds, the head-piece representing a full-blown rose.

"This Tenette placed just above my forehead, confining there with it a light lace *barbe*, the ends of which were looped with my back hair.

"A light, fleecy dress, ordered from Rogèr, covered with point-lace flounces, and decorated with rose-colored bows of ribbon, completed my attire.

"Tenette reminded me that Alexis was awaiting me, and I bade her call him. On entering, he seemed struck with my appearance, and as he led me beneath the chandelier to examine me minutely, he exclaimed:—

"'You are very beautiful, my child, to-night, very, very beautiful, and your toilette most *recherché*; but, Estelle, I am sorry to tell you that it is too late for a walk through the park. The guests are arriving rapidly, and Miss Rosetrevor has sent for you to join her, that she may present you to some of them.

"'Let us take another view of the charming scene from the window; it will be pleasant to remember it thus—closer contact would destroy some of its beauty. How beautiful yon Feast of Roses is! Truly. it would be a fit abode for fairies.'

"I must tell you here, that Mrs. Dexton, of New Orleans, was in London when we were there, and, being from our own country, though only an acquaintance, we saw her frequently. Miss Rose-trevor, in compliment to us, sent her an invitation to her ball, and she came to it. She was dressed with great taste, and a good deal admired.

"My feet were only kept quiet, on entering the ball-room, by the request of Miss Rosetrevor that I should remain with her for a while in the reception-room, that she might present me to some of her guests; for the music that greeted my ears was all that was needed to complete the ravishing scene and my delight.

"The dresses of the company were very handsome, but many of them lacked the true Parisian finish.

"When, at last, I was permitted to enter the ball-room, I was like a freed bird. Major Rose-trevor, to whom I had promised the first dance, claimed it, and directly I was whirling in the *pas de deux*.

"My card was soon filled, and redowas, polkas, and waltzes, followed in quick succession.

"I did not see Alexis until after my eighth dance; then I found him awaiting me, as my partner conducted me to a seat.

"He begged me not to dance so quickly in succession, but I would not listen to him; the music, the perfumed fountain, the pictures, the flowers, the whole scene had made me almost *dérangée* with pleasure. Again and again I whirled through the wild mazes of the different dances, led on by spirits as full of life as myself.

"Alexis tried to reason with me, and then, finding me still wilful, he quietly placed my arm in his, and led me into the conservatory.

"Not a word was said by either of us, as he drew me gently along, and ensconced himself in a seat by my side, in the *lovers' corner*, which was shaded from observation by the lemon and orange trees in front of it. Then he said:

"'I have seen the effects of great excitement upon you, Estelle, and I fear for you to dance so much and so rapidly. No doubt, Major Rosetrevor and your other partners, and perhaps you, too, my pretty Estelle, think me a great ogre thus to interrupt your dancing, in the height of your enjoyment; but, believe me, I do so for the sake of your health. Let us sit here for a while, and then go to the rooms for promenading; but please, dear Estelle, do not dance again.'

"How could I be any thing but gently acquiescing in return? I even said 'dear Alexis,' when I an-



swered him, saying, 'Excuse me for being so wayward; but the whole ball is so entrancing, I forgot every thing but that I was dancing somewhere, somehow.'

"He drew me to him; my head was on his shoulder. 'Now, now,' I said to myself, my heart nearly bursting with its throbs, 'now he will tell me he loves me.'

"He drew me closer; our eyes met; the intensified expression of his did not frighten me—I could have died in that embrace; my lips were almost upon his. There were voices—we moved not; they mentioned our names, and this, Venetia, this is what they said:—

"'Who was this *houri*, this lovely Madam Averton?' a voice inquired of Mrs. Dexton—which I recognized as belonging to a Mr. Morton, a courtly man who often visited Miss Rosetrevor—'who was she? she fascinates every one with her *piquante*, yet, at the same time, elegant manners. No wonder that her husband, who is old enough to be her father, watches her with argus eyes.'

"'She was Estelle Dayton, of Louisiana,' said Mrs. Dexton; 'her father, an elegant gentleman of the old school; her mother, of one of our oldest and best Creole families. A few years ago, Colonel Dayton was considered one of the wealthiest plant-

ers in our State, and his daughter has been splendidly educated. Of late years, Colonel Dayton's property has been gradually dwindling away; so much so that had not Estelle—Madam Averton—been forced to marry Averton, all must have been sold under the hammer. It is very plain to see that Madam Averton does not love her husband. I know that she was and is deeply attached to her cousin, Lawrence Maupay, a poor but worthy young man. However, in my opinion, the marriage with Averton was not forced; she knew well that she was a bright jewel that could be enhanced by a brilliant setting; so she threw poverty to the winds. Be it as it may, she received Lawrence Maupay clandestinely, even to the day before her marriage, and parted from him vowing eternal love. As for Maupay, he was for a while *au désespoir*; but when we left Louisiana—if one might judge from his ever-joyous face—he was fast recovering. Perhaps he intends to wait for Estelle, as a charming and rich widow—quite a romance, would it not be?’

“‘And is her husband ignorant of these facts?’ inquired Mr. Morton.

“‘Ignorant and innocent as a lamb,’ replied Mrs. Dexton. ‘I hear it said he is jealous, though, to a great degree.’

“‘It is difficult,’ interrupted Mr. Morton, ‘to

believe this of one apparently so child-like and pure; her eyes are mirrors of truth. There must be some error; besides, no one could associate with Averton and treat him thus—his very mien would command deeper respect, even if his intellect and purity of character did not. Observe his form, his face—what glorious eyes! what nobleness of expression! Why, to my mind, he is just the man a woman would adore. *On dit*, that Miss Rosetrevor finds him particularly agreeable, and uses all her arts to keep him by her side.'

"'Yes,' added Mrs. Dexton, 'so I hear. But what I have told you concerning Madam Averton is true—I have it from an intimate friend of the family, who represents her as the incarnation of deceit and vanity, in spite of these innocent ways of hers—so charming, so *naïve*.' And, with a sardonic laugh, fed by the bitterness of her own evil nature, and accompanied by Mr. Morton, she passed into the ball-room.

"Just think of this woman spreading so unjust a report! and she had only gained admittance to this ball through me!

"No wonder that Alexis took his arm from my waist, and that I, half fainting, sank back into my seat.

"My face was in my hands—I dared not look up. I could not believe it was the Alexis who had

spoken so gently a few moments since, who now said :—

“ ‘Shall we promenade, or join Miss Rosetrevor?’

“ ‘No, no,’ I said; ‘I must go to my room. Make my excuses to Miss Rosetrevor; tell her I am not well.’

“I could utter no more. Why, why had I not the courage to say, ‘Alexis, the tale you have heard is false; the truth has been so contorted that it has made me appear a heartless, unprincipled creature, when I am dying for thy love. Oh, my Alexis!’ But, no—I could not. His coldness awed me, and I was dumb.

“In silence he conducted me to my room, bidding me a formal good-night. Again I stood at my oriel window; again I gazed at the enchanting scene beneath it. ‘Will all my life,’ I cried, in agony, ‘be as illusory as this night—this scene?’

“Another moment, and I saw Alexis and Miss Rosetrevor walking together on the terrace; and I threw myself on my couch in a paroxysm of tears, while

“A still small voice spake unto me—  
‘Thou art so full of misery,  
Were it not better not to be?’”

“After the above letter,” said Venetia, “I did not

hear from Estelle until she had been some weeks in Paris, to which place she went in company with her husband and the Rosetrevors, about a week after the ball. I then received the following letter, which I will keep for to-morrow."

We readily assented, and went to our rooms; and the next day she read as follows:—

"PARIS, —————, ———

"Our apartments are situated on the world-renowned *Boulevards*, and I pass my time, when not sight-seeing, or receiving or paying visits, in gazing at the life-moving scenes below my windows. At night they are even more brilliant than in the day—then the very atmosphere seems vivified.

"The coldness between Alexis and myself is greater than ever. My pride and chagrin at the idea of his believing the words of that vile woman, Mrs. Dexton, and his increased hauteur, keep up and strengthen our estrangement. My heart tells me there is but one course to pursue, and that a plain and open one. But remember Alexis's peculiar manner—the disparity in our ages, his greater experience and knowledge of human nature. Ought he not to be the first to seek a reconciliation?

"Constantly, I am, as it were, enveloped in a mist of excitement. Is this why my evil nature has

so gotten the better of me, that it should cause me to behave as I own I sometimes do to Alexis?

"In the solitude of my room, to which I seldom resort until 'tired nature' begs for its 'sweet restorer, balmy sleep,' the still small voice warns me of my deeds, so unworthy my better nature and my life-long teachings; yet, on the morrow, when the excitement comes again, again I wound Alexis's noble nature.

"I grieve, and dare not show my discontent:  
I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate.

"We have been overwhelmed with kindness and attention on the part of our American friends; besides, Miss Rosetrevor and her brother, who are with us, have spread the report of our wealth, and your little Estelle has been quite the rage.

"Day and night our rooms are filled with beautiful women, elegant men, and even some of the *literati* and wits of society.

"Alexis seems to prefer Miss Rosetrevor's parlors to mine, though he is still very watchful of his 'child,' and has certain rules about my going out and receiving, which are never infringed.

"He never wishes me to go beyond our saloons, unless he makes one of the party.

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"His generosity is still lavish—the most exquisite articles of jewelry, and every luxury that Paris can afford, he showers upon me. He is chary of nothing but his love.

"Day after day we pass in an ecstasy of false pleasure, for such it must be, when it leaves such bitterness in its train. When, for a moment, I am alone, my woman's heart holds sway, and cries in agony for love, love, love, but finds no answering voice to ring back its tone.

"In viewing the different objects of art and interest here, and in listening to the performance of operas, I do find true enjoyment. Alexis has a friend here, named Pierson, an American by birth, but for many years a cosmopolite. He is learned and elegant, and very agreeable. We find him quite an addition on our sight-seeing expeditions, of which he makes himself *cicerone*. At times there is a peculiar plaintiveness in his tones—affected, I think—which, pleasant as some find it, jars upon me, in a manner I feel but cannot describe. Alexis admires him, and thinks him of a noble nature. While I admire his intellect and conversational powers, I feel doubtful of his nature, and yet can give no reason for my doubt. However, he is very charming company, and enables us to pass many hours most agreeably; so,

as the lawyers say, we will give him the benefit of the doubt.

"The following is an extract from Estelle's second letter from Paris," said Venetia, and continued to read :—

"Yes, Venetia, I am very, very unhappy. The constant whirl of fashionable excitement that I live in is not for my good, and yet I have persisted in it. Alexis protested against it again and again, advising me to be more moderate—not to go to such extremes; but, in my defiant spirit, his words were unheeded; so, at last, he left me to my own guidance. Had he spoken to me in loving words, or even tones, I could have been led by him. But no; his words were formal, his manner cold, and he advised me as a friend; and I, all the time, loving him with the intensity of despair.

"I cannot believe he loves me, as he once said he did; for, had he one spark of that divine flame, he could not encase it so securely but that I could perceive it.

"Oh! Venetia, I love him, I love him! And, doing so, to have him treat me so coldly! It nearly drives me to desperation.



"It has happened that days, weeks, and, at one time, a month elapsed, without our interchanging a single word, except as a mere matter of form. And this sort of life, in which I have resorted to a wild kind of gayety, is killing me; for I love him—yes, I love him—cold, haughty, proud, and forbidding as he is, I adore him—and yet I have seemed the heartless thing I am not.

"My opera-box has been crowded with devotees. They have followed me home, and dance has succeeded dance, even into the small hours of the morning. Then often I have laid my head upon my pillow, without daring to say my never before omitted prayers. Then came days of remorse and agony; a spirit of contrition would steal over me, and I would determine that not another day should elapse without opening my whole heart to Alexis. But again I would be drawn into the whirlpool of excitement, and would 'care for naebody, and naebody care for me.' Then ever and anon came the remembrance of the sweet moments experienced with Alexis in the conservatory, the night of Miss Rosetrevor's ball, and I think I could die in the fulfilment of another like it. But now, oh! Venetia, I fear I have estranged my husband from me for ever.

"One of his strictest injunctions has been, that

I should never visit any place of public amusement unless he made one of the party.

"Last week he went to dine with some friends. I was to remain at home with Miss Rosetrevor. Just after his departure, Pierson came in, declaring we must go to hear a new opera—the Emperor and Empress were to be there—it was to be a grand affair. Miss Rosetrevor was not averse to going, and, knowing all the time how displeased Alexis would be, I consented to go also.

"No one can conceive the misery I endured after entering the carriage. I felt as if the last link were severed between Alexis and myself. I could have crushed out my own heart for listening to its evil dictates.

"As usual, our opera-box was crowded, but I heeded not the flattering word, the brilliant wit, nor the—to me hitherto—entrancing scene. The music fell upon my dulled ear as if of a far-off dream.

"The opera seemed interminable. I would have gone home, but I could not leave Miss Rosetrevor. And then, I thought, if I do go, what can I say to Alexis, for this direct and palpable disregard to his most express desire? How can I meet his chiding eye and cold manner?

"I noticed something more than ordinarily de-

voted in Pierson's manner to me. I did not like it, but was too unhappy and *distracte* to rebuke it. Would I had aroused myself to do so, for then my ear would never have been sullied, as it was a few moments after, as he leaned over my chair and whispered in my ear. Good God! he believed my reverie appertained to him—the idiot!

“Oh! Alexis, Alexis, I thought, why have I so blindly disregarded your commands, which, now I see, were consequent upon your matured knowledge of the world, wishing, in the singleness of your heart, to guard me from the snares of a Parisian life?

“The opera was over. ‘Avaunt!’ I said, in my heart and voice, to the fiend who dared to speak such vile words to me, and who now put out his arm to conduct me to the carriage—the arm that I saw, and yet appeared not to see. ‘Avaunt! or I will blast your character for ever to your friend, Alexis Averton!’

“The carriage reached our apartments; I tarried a moment behind the others of our party to speak to Pierson. My words were few, but by them he understood he would be no more received.

“We entered the saloon. Alexis was there. He greeted us with his usual courtliness. He con-

ducted Miss Rosetrevor to the staircase, bidding her good-night; then he returned, and spoke to me as he had never spoken before—grasping my shoulder, not roughly, but firmly, as he uttered, in a voice deep with passionate anger, the following words :

“‘Madam, if you have no more respect than this for my commands, it is better we should part. Any woman of ordinary prudence, if she did not love her husband, would, at least, not behave in a manner to make him despise her.’ And, with a withering look of scorn, he left me sinking on the floor, with my heart crying out in agony for his love.

“Tenette found me thus, long afterwards, and carried me almost lifeless to my room.”

“The following extract from Alexis’s diary Estelle saw after her reconciliation with her husband, and sent it to me, to show me how unnecessary their estrangement was,” said Venetia. “I will read it here, as it will heighten your interest in this ‘heart history.’”

“Heavens! what have I done to Estelle! How cowardly, how miserably I have behaved!—how low I must have sunken in her estimation—for I

despise myself. Yet I could not have believed she would have thus defied me. I was beside myself when I so roughly grasped her shrinking form—poor little thing! Did I mar her delicate skin? Wretch—wretch that I am! I could grovel at her feet and plead for forgiveness; then, surely, her woman's heart would feel for me—perhaps love me. Oh, she would love me, could she feel how much I would dare for one act of loving demonstration from her. She intended no harm, poor innocent child. She has yet to see her eighteenth birthday, and I—unreasonable man that I am—expect the maturity of thought and action of my own lengthened experience. Will she ever forgive this outburst of passion? Yet, oh! Estelle, had I loved thee less, I would not have thus forgotten my dignity!"

#### POSTSCRIPT TO ESTELLE'S LAST LETTER.

"I have been confined to my bed, dear Venetia, since I wrote the body of this letter. My only comfort has been in listening to Alexis, who, hour after hour, repeats his inquiries regarding my health. The tones of his voice, so rich, so gentle, fall on the saddened chords of my spirit like refreshing rains on drooping flowers. I feel that he repents of his

harshness. I do not blame him for it. I deserved it all, and more. But, Venetia, I cannot live thus. Would, would, as in my childish fairy tales, some beneficent fairy godmother would interpose a miraculous wand, and dissipate the—I know not what—that hangs over us.

“To-day Alexis proposed that we should proceed at once to Rome, instead of waiting here another month, as it was our intention to do. I acquiesced in the arrangement. I shall be glad of the change; and, oh! dear Venetia, I pray that this change, and the contemplation of grand old Rome—and objects more worthy noble thought than any I find here, where every thing seems striving ‘to push eternity from human thought’—may strengthen me in my better resolves for the future; for truly have I experienced here this couplet of Parnell’s:

‘No real happiness is found  
In trailing purple on the ground.’”

EXTRACT FROM ESTELLE'S FIRST LETTER FROM  
ROME.

“What will you say, dear Venetia, when I tell you that as yet there has been no explanation between Alexis and myself. Our intercourse, though,

is kinder and pleasanter—in fact, we are seldom separated, so that again I am able to enjoy the rich stores of his cultivated mind ; and that, amidst the wonders of the Eternal City, is a blessing I fully appreciate.

“Fortunately for us, not one of the gay throng that surrounded us in Paris has followed us here—not even Miss Rosetrevor and her brother. It is true, we did not express a desire for them to do so—at which, I think, they felt chagrined ; but I had tired of ‘the din of the thinking, thoughtless crew,’ who, ‘bewildered, each their different paths pursue,’ and, in these sublime scenes of the past, I wished to be alone with Alexis, where I might again strive to ‘lift a reverent eye and thought to Heaven.’

“In the butterfly-life we led in Paris, there was nothing elevating, nothing of an inner life ; all was glittering show and vanity ; and, thoughtless and gay as I was there, I often secretly moralized over it, and those quaint lines of Quarles that you used to admire and repeat, commencing “She’s empty, hark ! she sounds,’ often came to my mind in my most reckless moments—particularly the three last lines :

‘Fond youth, oh, build thy hopes on surer grounds

Than what dull flesh propounds !

Trust not this hollow world. She’s empty, hark ! she sounds.’

"We have not yet seen much of the seven-hilled city; we have plenty of time at our disposal, and we intend to give each object of interest a full share of it.

"Every day we read of what we are going to see, or of what we have seen the day before; and in this way we find much silent though congenial thought, which adds much to our enjoyment.

"Alexis is teaching me Italian. I am sure he finds me any thing but Mezzofantian; but he is very patient, and points out many beauties in the language that I am sure I should not have discovered by myself. Then he speaks it so musically; the words fall from his lips as liquidly as the water falls in my fountain. But I have not told you about *my* fountain. To do so, I will go back and tell you of our arrival here.

"We found prepared for our reception one of the loveliest villas to be desired. Its situation is quite elevated, and commands an extensive view, containing some of the finest objects of interest here.

"The saloons, banquet-room—it is too commonplace to say dining-room, in Rome—are in admirable taste; but my boudoir—where I now write—and my adjacent sleeping apartment, are perfect gems of taste and luxury.



"Alexis, knowing my aversion to cold, bare floors, sent carpets for the drawing-rooms and my bedroom. The other floors display rich marble and mosaic work.

"But this boudoir, where I now write, is charming. It has long, wide windows, opening on a broad terrace. Its walls are hung with rose-colored silk, its furniture is ebony inlaid with ivory. In the centre is a small sparkling fountain, surrounded by a *parterre* of roses, which seem to bloom eternally. Near it lies a luxurious pile of pink, downy cushions, and on these I often lie, watching the play of the fountains, or dipping my hand in its cooling waters, while the pretty spray, now and then, touches my brow. Grouped about are beautiful statues, rare tables, mythological paintings, and many other objects of taste. It is a bower in which Love should reign supreme—but, as yet, he does not.

"When I first saw this fairy bower, I threw myself with childish rapture upon the downy pile of cushions, and then turned to thank Alexis for his thoughtful generosity, with my heart filled with affectionate emotion, but he had disappeared. I arose—went on to the terrace. He was not there. After looking everywhere else, I descended into the garden, and finally found him in deep revery—

his old habit. His face was so sad and unsympathetic that the warm words fled from my lips, and only formal ones took their place.

“‘Another moment lost,’ I murmured in my heart, as I went back to the villa, ‘when all the past might have been cleared. It must be destiny.’ I went again to the dainty room, but it no longer charmed me as it had done before, and the water of the fountain, instead of glittering and dancing, now only wept in unison with my aching heart.

“You will think, dear Venetia, that I will be spoiled in the midst of this exquisite luxury; but no, I trust not. Old Rome is teaching me lessons for my good. Often, while reclining on my silky pillows, looking out towards the wondrous city, its ruins, its statues, its crumbling magnificence, I say to myself: ‘Estelle, sink not into lethargic ease; by such was this proud city brought to its present condition. Rouse thyself, lest thou too bring low a temple of the living God!’

“Moonlight nights we reserve for contemplating the ruins of the Coliseum; the stupendous architecture, mellowed in the moon’s ray, is indescribably grand.

“I ask myself, as I gaze upon it, if we are not of an inferior race to the wonderful men who con-

ceived and executed this work. When I turn my eyes to the once proud city, I find no solution to my many questioning thoughts; but I do find a feeling that says to me: 'There is no true life but in God and his religion.'

"Alexis is all in all to me, though still so distant. Life would be worthless to me without his companionship. I am gaining courage in his presence, and, at times, I fancy that he relaxes his cold manner to me—he seems nearer my reach, or perhaps I am travelling towards him. Oh! may I reach him and his noble heart! Such an attainment would repay every hour of anguish I have suffered."

"Now I will read," said Venetia, "another extract from Alexis's diary, as it comes in better, here than it would anywhere else."

#### EXTRACT.

"I feared I showed my vexation at the childish way in which Estelle threw herself on her dainty couch, the evening of our arrival here, without deigning to notice my presence. But then it was natural; what is there in my older mien and manner befitting her fairy bower, or her youthful en-

thusiasm? Am I only the ogre of the enchanted castle?

"Of late she seems less childish—more thoughtful. Does she imbibe this from the many grand and ennobling objects around her? Are they maturing her pliant intellect with their silent inspirations? Yes; for even the most thoughtless must catch the saddened halo that hangs, like a warning to all, over these crumbling ruins, bidding us not to trust earthly things."

ANOTHER EXTRACT FROM THE SAME, OF A LATER  
DATE.

"Already my auguries are more hopeful; already I see, perhaps afar off, a bright fulfilment of my life's dream, and that the possession of Estelle's love. Oh! my child, how my heart thrills at the thought of this hoped-for bliss! How thy young life guides my every thought and action! Yes, nearer and nearer our souls approach and harmonize into one. I will have patience—I will not hasten the hour, lest my timid bird flee from my arms again."

"Another letter from Estelle," said Venetia; and she continued to read as follows:—

"Oh, Venetia! I hasten to you with my soul flooded with happiness at the thought of an almost ripened joy. What think you? I am loved—I am loved! This is the chorus of my heart, the livelong day—but let me explain.

"Yesterday, after my Italian lesson was over, Alexis handed me a paper, saying that it contained some Italian verses for me to translate. I laid them aside with my books, little thinking they contained words for which my heart had been sighing many a long day.

"This morning, when he came as usual, his voice—I could not then understand it—betrayed some agitation, and his eyes, his glorious eyes, had a strangely softened look in them, as he asked me for the translation. I wondered, at the time, why he so quickly resumed his old manner, when I said I had not yet looked at them; but, throughout the whole lesson, he was more lover-like than he has ever been, and I longed to look straight in his eyes, and try to read those mirrors of the soul; but, as ever, I dared not.

"When we had finished the lesson, he said: 'I am sorry you have not translated the verses, for you know to-morrow we start for our trip to the mountains, and it will be some time before we resume our studies.'

"There was something so different from his usual manner, when he said this, that, as soon as he left the room, I hastened to the table where the verses were, and in a moment I was almost in a delirium of joy. They were by him, and by them I knew he loved me—he loved me !

"Had they been any thing else, I should have been an hour over them ; but my heart bid defiance to my head, as soon as I read the first line, and in a moment their whole meaning was before me.

"Here they are—read them for yourself:—

'*Ma belle Estelle* is very fair—

Fair as the flowers of the bright *parterre*,

Girding the sparkling fountain;—

The fountain that throws its glittering spray

Over my darling every day,

Lying and watching the sunlight play

Through its silvery mountain.

'Dreamy hues from a rosy dome

Over her arms and shoulders loom,

Losing their gorgeous tinging

In the golden light of her straying hair,

Circling her brow with loving care,

But brightening her violet eyes so rare,

Beneath each jet-like fringing.

'Statues of marble, baskets of gold,

•Vases in bronze, of antique mould,

Paintings of classic meaning,  
Grouped with a table of emerald green,  
Carved, it is said, for a Turkish queen,  
Out of a single stone, I ween—  
All is with beauty teeming.

'But, to perfect my darling's bower,  
Cupid should mark each golden hour,  
Our happiness completing.  
Estelle, Estelle, my heart is lone;  
Canst thou not answer its thrilling tone?  
Tell me the secret of thine own—  
List to my soul's entreating!'

"I did not hear from Estelle," said Venetia, "for nearly two months after this last letter; and I looked upon it as a good omen, and believed that she and her husband were so in love with each other, that she had no time to devote to her friend. At last, however, I received the following letter, written after her return to Rome, after the trip to the mountains. I will not read a description of the entire trip; but only that part connected with her heart's history—for I see you are all interested in it.

"Speaking of a portion of the Apennine Mountains, Estelle writes:—

"In this range of mountains is quite a high peak,

seldom visited by tourists; though the peasants in the vale below it told us that, with a proper guide, it was not difficult nor dangerous of ascent; and that the view from it was more extended and sublime than any in this region.

“Leaving Tenette with our effects at a small cottage, hanging like a bird-cage to the side of the mountain, and securing a peasant who we presumed was a competent guide, we commenced the ascent.

“It was just a week since Alexis had handed me the verses, and in that week I had not, as he did not ask me, told him I had read them, and that I, too, loved—though he must have perceived it by my conscious face.

“The mighty barrier that had been between us was fast crumbling away. Hand in hand we clambered the mountain-side; he, at times, as we stopped, making me rest upon his sturdy form. How wildly beat my heart then, and how eagerly my famished ear drank in his words of tender care.

“A wondrous beauty spread around us, leaving pleasant visions of simple hamlets in far-off vales. Picturesque cottages clustering around a piercing spire, whose glittering cross gleamed far and wide its tale of suffering and reward, and



visions of peaceful lakes far below us, and feathery clouds above us.

"How it happened that, towards the middle of the day, we lost sight of our guide, we could not then imagine; but such was the fact.

"At first, thinking he would return where we were in a few moments, we did not trouble ourselves about him; but when hours passed, and day began to decline, Alexis became alarmed—and well he might be so, for we must spend the night on the mountain, if the guide failed us.

"Daylight began to wane, darkness to come on, and we felt, indeed, that we had no alternative but to remain where we were. We feared to advance or return, lest we might come near some dangerous abyss. Already we had advanced to a considerable height, and the night-wind blew chilly upon us. I looked at Alexis—his eyes met mine. I felt no fear, for he was my protector.

"Night advanced, throwing her sable folds over mountain, sky, and dell. One by one the stars peeped out—quiet sentinels o'er all. No word was spoken—no sound heard, save great Nature's whisper, that speaks so audibly to our souls. Darker and darker grew the night; colder and colder blew the breath of the mountain. We felt it not; for closer and closer had Alexis wrapped me in his

arms, until soul met soul in one long life-giving kiss—the sweet atonement of every pain and anguish.

“Then words of love gushed from our inmost hearts, and I knew what a true man’s love could be—what it was in my Alexis. I could feel the pulses of his great heart beat against my own, as again and again he embraced me, pouring forth, between each kiss, his loving words.

“At last, seating ourselves upon a rocky projection, Alexis bade me pillow my head upon his breast, and try to sleep—for it lacked many hours of day—and it was evident, until that time, we must remain where we were; and, oh, how pleasant it was to rest my head there! how often had I longed for that resting-place—and this I told Alexis, hiding, even in the darkness, my face, lest it might betray too much how sweet to feel his lips upon my brow, his hand smoothing back my floating hair, as he drew me closer and closer to his heart.

“Long I lay thus, my soul replete with enrapturing joy, regardless of the fleeting moments. Hours passed, though they seemed but one, when Alexis aroused me, exclaiming:

“‘Look, Estelle! my darling, look!’

“I arose, as from a mist of dreams.

“‘What, what is that long line of light,’ I exclaimed, ‘so far *below us*?’

"Slowly and reverently Alexis spoke :

'A God, a God appears ;

A God, a God, the vocal hills reply ;

The rocks proclaim the approaching Deity.

Lo, earth receives Him from the bending skies—

Sink down, ye mountains, and ye valleys, rise !'

"No other word was spoken—our hearts were too full for utterance. Slowly and majestically uprose God's crown of glory—the sun ; higher and higher it came, flooding mountain, sky, and us, with its beams ; and slowly we sank upon our knees, hand clasped in hand, as if pressed downward by the ministering angels of its approach.

"Then words of prayer, with tears—the heart's true contrition—gushed from our lips and eyes, acknowledging the power of our great Creator. Then came the chime of bells, borne on the liquid air, so holily, so sweet, that they were as angel choruses dropping from the skies.

"And here, Venetia, we renewed our marriage vows, with God and His blessed angels our only witnesses.

"How glorious was Alexis, as he stood upon the mountain-brow ! how resplendent were his eyes with every nobleness ! Where, where was the awe that had kept me from him ! Gone, gone forever ; for I

nestled in his arms, I looked in his true eyes, pouring out all my soul to him, adoring him above all, save my God; for he is one of God's noblest creations, and filled with His good spirit."

"Well," said Queen, as Venetia finished, "you have given us quite a novelette. Do you ever hear from Estelle now?"

"No," said Venetia, "not since the blockade; though I am always hoping to do so."

"If you do hear," continued Queen, "you must certainly read us the letters; for I shall never cease to be interested in her. There is one thing that strikes me as strange: I cannot conceive how one woman could open her heart to another, as Estelle did to you."

"Not at all, not at all strange," interrupted Pet; "the poor child—for she was not more than a child when she married—needed, as all women do, a confidant, a some one, to whom to pour out her youthful exuberance. Circumstances denied it to her in her husband, and, fortunately for her, she chose Venetia."

"Yes," said Venetia, "she not only told me her story, but, in one of her letters, she gave me leave to tell it to others, that, by so doing, I might show—especially young married persons—the necessity

of strict and constant confidence; thereby preventing many an unnecessary and painful estrangement."

"Why, Venetia," said Queen, "if you had written to Alexis, and enclosed one of Estelle's letters to you, in which she declared her love for him, you might have reconciled them immediately."

"I never," replied Venetia, "have seen any good effected by a third party interfering in married people's private affairs; instead of doing good, they only bring dislike upon themselves."

"Yes," said Queen; "and woe be unto them, if they interfere to make trouble, even if the married couple be at daggers' points—in which case they are likely to find themselves in the same predicament as the officer of justice did, who committed an Irish woman's husband to jail, after her own complaint against him for beating her: 'Sure, you scoundrel,' she said, 'and is that the way you are going to trate a poor innocent man!'"

"I think," said sister Maddie, "that Estelle gave up Lawrence very quietly."

"It would seem so," said Venetia; "but the truth is, she never had a deep affection for him—her father proved a true prophet. Perhaps, though, she was not conscious of it herself; she always had so true a reverence for Alexis, that, in reality, it was

love. Their natures were so different, it took time to assimilate them: he had to grow younger, and she older, before they could be thoroughly happy."

It was at least a week before it was convenient for Queen to contribute her story. The morning that she did so, we met in Pet's room. Pet had been very sad for some days. Battles had been fought by portions of the army to which her husband and brother belonged, and news concerning them was slow in reaching us. She tried to be cheerful, and not let her sadness sadden us; but her eyes bore the traces of weeping and sleepless nights.

Sister Maddie was with Pet when we entered, and they were singing sacred songs. One of their favorites—and I shall never hear it without thinking of these two sweet women—was, "Jesus, Saviour of my soul," sung to the air of "When the swallows homeward fly." They were just finishing it when our Queen entered, *radiant*.

"Well," she exclaimed, "sister Maddie, you and Pet ought to be hired out for revivals; if it were not for me, you would make the whole household a set of moping, croaking dyspeptics. I not only am obliged to keep up my-own spirits, which, indeed, is a hard task, but I have to do away with the influence of the lugubrious hymns that you and Pet

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are forever singing. Now you shall both stop them, for I am not equal to the task." And, with a martyr-like groan, she sank into a seat, and we calling for our story, she gave us the following.

## QUEEN'S STORY;

OR,

MRS. DESBOROUGH'S SECRET.

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"THE second winter after I entered society, I was exceedingly anxious to spend a portion of it in New Orleans. I had been there twice, passing a week each time with my father, who occasionally went on business; but my mother never being able to accompany us, owing to her numerous domestic cares, and my father's affairs calling him home after a brief stay, I was never allowed to remain, as he was not willing to leave me under the chaparionage of any of his friends. Consequently, my desire, up to the period I now speak of, had never been gratified.

"The little taste I had received of the pleasures of that fascinating city increased my desire to remain there during the gay season, and, on the occasion of my third visit, I determined to do so, if it was in the range of possibility.



"The only intimate female friend my parents had in the city was a remote connection of my father's, a Mrs. Desborough. She was the sister of my uncle's first wife—my uncle on my father's side. I do not know that I ought to say intimate friend, in speaking of her, for, for several years previous to the time to which I am alluding, she had secluded herself almost entirely from the world, so that even her relatives had seen but little of her.

"My father and mother often spoke of her most affectionately, and when we went to New Orleans Mrs. Desborough called to see me, and was very kind and loving in her manner to me; and she spoke of my parents as if she still had great interest in their welfare.

"Owing to the inclemency of the weather, I was obliged to leave the city without going to see her; but the next visit that I paid to New Orleans, I did not wait for her to call on me, but, obeying my mother's last injunctions, I went to see her the day after my arrival there.

"She lived in the lower part of the French faubourg, in an immense house, surrounded with walls so high that, from the opposite side of the street, only the upper portion of it could be seen. A grated iron gate led to the entrance, by which

hung a bell; this we were obliged to sound to gain admittance. The gate, which was not only locked, but bolted, was opened always by an old negro man, with perfectly white hair.

"The whole appearance of the house and wall, from the street, was funereal in the extreme; but on entering the gate the effect was more pleasant, though still there was an air of mystery about the premises, not congenial to one of my temperament.

"Flowers and shrubbery grew luxuriously over the grounds, the walls, and the house. Magnolia-trees, jasmines, roses, and creeping vines were clinging together in wild confusion. There was a gorgeous sort of gloom about the whole place—it looked grand and aristocratic.

"The only portions of the interior of the house that I saw, when I called on Mrs. Desborough, were the hall and drawing-room. Both were lofty, large, and impressive. The furniture, which was in the antique style, massive and peculiar, heightened the impressiveness.

"The hall, in which there was no staircase, was particularly grand and gloomy. Its sides were panelled with dark, unvarnished wood; the doors from it, leading to different parts of the house, were of the same material, and it was difficult to distinguish the doors from the panels.

"Magnificent paintings hung upon the walls, and these, with numerous silver branches for holding candles, somewhat relieved the sombre appearance.

"This hall was divided in the centre by a heavy arch, carved of the same dark wood as the panels, from the centre of which hung a silver chandelier, filled with wax tapers. Under this stood a very peculiar but gracefully shaped chair, of the brightest crimson, and at its side was a harp.

"I am particular in describing this hall, for I want you to remember it. I have a curious tale to tell you in connection with it.

"The chair did not face the entrance-door of the hall, but stood in an angular position, and a person sitting in it, on looking up, would perceive before them the portrait of a very distinguished-looking person, in the first years of manhood. The beauty of the picture was remarkable.

"Mrs. Desborough was very wealthy. Besides her city property, which was considerable, she owned two plantations and several hundred negroes. She passed a portion of each year on her plantations, and while there, it was said, she entertained in the best manner. This, however, she never did in the city, and on no occasion did she ever attend any of the numerous balls and parties to which she was invited.

"She had one daughter, married, and, at the time of my story, living in Europe; and it was said she was devoted to her. This daughter had two children.

"It was a matter of surprise to the world generally, and to me particularly, that Mrs. Desborough, with her great wealth, should live in such complete seclusion. It was a known fact that, out of her many servants, she had but two at her city residence: one the gray-headed old negro man who opened the gate, named Cæsar; the other a quadroon woman of about Mrs. Desborough's own age, called Aunt Clementine, or, more familiarly, Teeny. This woman was a most dignified personage, about five feet six inches in height, and, with her red, white, and yellow turban, twisted into the towering, fantastic style of the French negresses, she looked nearly six feet. Uncle Cæsar and Aunt Teeny both spoke a curious *patois*, rather difficult of comprehension to one not familiar with it.

"To prevent more servants from being about the premises, Mrs. Desborough had all the food necessary for the family prepared at a restaurant near the house, and sent regularly.

"Mrs. Desborough was a highly-bred, elegant woman, and conversed delightfully; and though

she was at least forty years of age, and I only seventeen, I found her society charming. Some persons said that she was very fond of literary pursuits, and abstruse studies; others, that she was eccentric—attempting, in this way, to account for her secluded manner of living. But I once heard the part of a casual remark, made by my mother to my father, concerning her way of living, and I was sure there was a mystery somewhere.

“The day previous to the one on which my father and myself were to return home, I was sitting in my room, at the St. Charles Hotel, pondering in my mind some plan that I thought my father would agree to for my remaining in New Orleans, when a servant brought me Mrs. Desborough’s card. I was surprised to see it, for I had been to her house the day before to take my leave, and had received from her many kindly and affectionate messages for my mother.

“I arose to meet her, as she entered my room a few moments after, and she, greeting me with more than her usual affability, hastened to communicate the object of her visit.

“‘My dear,’ she said, ‘I know of your anxiety to remain in the city this winter, and also your father’s objections to leaving you here. To-day,

he passed an hour with me, and I asked him if his objections extended to me. He replied, 'Certainly not,' whereupon I told him I should drive directly to see you, and if you would accept my invitation to pass the remainder of the season with me, it would give me infinite pleasure. But, my dear,' she continued, 'before you accept the invitation, I must be candid, and tell you, that there will be many things connected with your visit to me that may not be agreeable to you. For instance, I can never give evening entertainments to your young friends. At dinner, I shall be most happy to see them, and you can receive them at any time you prefer during the week, provided they leave my house by ten o'clock at night. After that hour, no one but the present inmates of my house have been in it for the last twenty years—with the exception, of course, of my husband, who died, as you know, ten years ago. I am willing to attend the opera with you, for that will not detain me after the hour at which my house is closed for the night. As for the balls and parties, we will talk of them afterwards. I cannot attend them with you, but, no doubt, on such occasions your father will be contented with the chaperonage of some of my acquaintances for you.

“‘At any rate, my dear, I want you to come, and if you find my gloomy mansion and secluded life too sombre and dull, tell me so candidly, and you shall be at liberty to leave it at your own discretion. I really want you to visit me; your merry laugh, your ever joyous face, and happy temperament, will enliven the old walls of my house and brighten my spirits. I have taken a fancy to you, dear,’ she added; ‘you remind me of your mother; I was very fond of her as a girl, and many a gay hour have we passed together. Will you come?’

“Of course I consented, for not only was I becoming quite fond of Mrs. Desborough, but then there would be a good deal of *éclat* in visiting such a person; and then there was *the mystery*. Were not these powerful reasons to influence a girl of seventeen?

“Mrs. Desborough remained until my father came in, and it was agreed that I should stay two months with her. Accordingly, the next day we drove to her house, and my father, after committing me to her care, and bidding us good-by, left the city for his home.

“You will perceive that I have a mysterious story to relate in connection with Mrs. Desborough. I will therefore confine myself to that story, and

not give you any account of my own enjoyment during that winter. I will only say, it met all my expectations, and that when my parents recalled me home, at the end of the two months, I went very reluctantly.

"It was three o'clock when I arrived at Mrs. Desborough's. After a few congratulatory remarks, she conducted me to my room. The way to it appeared interminable.

"The house, I found, was built in a hollow square, with a court in the centre. We proceeded up a staircase to the right of the hall, then across the court by a long gallery, until we came to a pleasant suite of rooms, daintily and cozily furnished.

"These rooms, you will observe, were quite distant from the front portion of the house.

"‘This,’ said Mrs. Desborough, opening a door between the suite of rooms, ‘is your room. Ordinarily, I occupy a room in the main part of the house; but, while you are here, I shall make use of this suite, in order to be near you. I do not like to leave you in this remote part of the building by yourself.’

"I thought it singular that she did not put me in the main building, with herself, instead of going to the inconvenience of changing her own apart-



ments; but, of course, I said nothing, but thought it had some connection with the mystery.

“‘If you look out of this window,’ continued Mrs. Desborough, as she led me to it, ‘you will see a gate similar to the one by which you entered. It is through this gate you must come, when you are out after ten o’clock at night, at balls and parties. In an adjoining passage, a staircase leads up to these rooms from the garden, which will make it more convenient for you than to come through the front part of the house.’

“I am not going to detain you by giving any more detailed account of Mrs. Desborough’s establishment, except to say that an air of mystery constantly pervaded it, and my curiosity was excited by various occurrences.

“The rooms on the left side of the large hall were never opened. Once, when I was in it by myself, my girlish curiosity got the better of my politeness, and I turned the handles of the doors, thinking I would take a look at the rooms. The doors were all locked. Once, too, in passing through the hall—we never sat there—I thought I heard the voice as of some one reading, in the supposed uninhabited rooms. The voice was tragic in its tones. It could not belong to Mrs. Desborough, for I had just seen her in the garden.

Uncle Cæsar was in the garden also, and Aunt Teeny in the court; and these individuals, as far as I knew, were the only inmates of the house. What did it mean?

"One thing was particularly remarkable: Mrs. Desborough never remained, nor allowed me to remain, in the front part of the house after ten o'clock at night. If I was playing on the piano, or reading, or receiving any of my young friends, at ten o'clock she quietly reminded me of the hour, and my friends bade us good-night; if we were alone, she also reminded me of the hour, and I always went immediately to my room, and she followed me.

"One night we sat reading in the drawing-room; the works we were perusing were new, and we were both very much absorbed in the contents. The French clock on the mantelpiece tinkled forth its hour, which we both supposed our usual one for retiring, when, on glancing towards it, I perceived it was half-past ten.

"'Why,' said I, 'Mrs. Desborough, it is half-past ten!'

"'No, no!' she exclaimed, in an agitated voice; but, on finding that such was the case, she almost dragged me from the room, through the hall to the staircase; but she was not quick enough to

prevent my seeing that the front room on the opposite side of the hall was open and brilliantly lighted—the room I had always supposed locked and uninhabited—and resting on the woodwork of the open door, I saw distinctly, as we hastened by it, a delicate white hand, covered with jewels. Mrs. Desborough remarked that Aunt Teeny was looking for some lost article in the vacant room; but this did not satisfy me. The mystery was connected with that room; it had an inmate, who possessed a small white hand, which evidently did not belong to Aunt Teeny. What did it all mean?

“It was a long time that night before I could sleep. Turn which way I would, I saw the small jewelled hand.

“I suppose it was about half an hour after, that I distinctly heard the sound of a harp, as if struck by a master-hand. I intuitively connected the small white hand I had seen with the harp that stood in the hall. I called to Mrs. Desborough, asking her if she heard it; I received no answer, and, lighting a candle, for I had extinguished mine, preparatory to retiring, I went into her room. She was not there. An hour after I heard her enter her room.

“The next morning, when I spoke to Mrs. Desborough of hearing the music, she said it was

probably street music—that there had been numerous wandering harpers about of late.. I said nothing then or afterwards, though I frequently heard the music, and always at the same hour.

“One night I was at a very large party, and I had been there but a short time, when, owing to the heat of the rooms, and fatigue, probably consequent upon an incessant round of gayety, I fainted. The lady, under whose charge Mrs. Desborough had placed me, concluded, when I came to, that I ought to return home immediately, and she ordered her carriage and took me there.

“When we arrived at the gate, my *chaperone*, at first, insisted upon alighting with me; but I prevented her by assuring her of my complete recovery, the fresh air of the night having effected wonders.

“Bidding her good-night, I unlocked the gate—for I always took the key of it with me, at Mrs. Desborough's request—and passed into the garden. It was the gate to which Mrs. Desborough had drawn my attention the first day I came to her house to stay, and which I had made use of according to her suggestion.

“Arriving at the door, which led to the staircase leading to my own suite of rooms, I found it locked. I called out towards the upper windows,

thinking Mrs. Desborough was in her room and would hear me. I received no reply. After waiting a few moments longer, I went around to the front part of the house.

"Imagine my surprise, as I faced it, to see all the lower portion of it brilliantly lighted. I advanced directly up the steps. Just as I was about to turn the door-handle, I perceived that the transom at the side of the door was open, and, hearing the sound of harp music, I very naturally looked in. What I saw arrested my hand, and I stood rooted to the spot!

"Within the hall, seated in the crimson chair, was a beautiful woman, her hands and arms sweeping gracefully over a harp, and from which she brought forth exquisite music. She was facing the picture of the handsome man, of which I have heretofore spoken, and her eyes, which were wonderfully large and peculiar, were fixed upon it with an intense expression of agony and love. Her features and head were perfectly classic; her hair as black as night; her skin perfectly colorless, and, but for the expressive eyes, she would have had the appearance of a corpse.

"Her dress was white and flowing, displaying to advantage a swan-like neck and tapering arms. Around her waist was a girdle of diamonds; her

head was encircled with them also, and her hands and arms were brilliant with the same precious gems.

"As I stood gazing upon her, she warbled forth an old Spanish melody, in a rich contralto voice, the words of which were full of passionate love. Her eyes were still fixed upon the picture, and, as she drew near the close of the song, they became luminous with a look of intense expectation. She paused for a few moments after its completion, with the same expression resting on her face; then the eyes lost their life-like look, her hands fell from the harp, and she sank backwards in the chair.

"Mrs. Desborough and Aunt Teeny—either of whom I had not before seen, so great was my surprise at the sight of this strange lady—now came from behind the chair, and Mrs. Desborough put her arms lovingly around the beautiful woman, saying:—

"‘Come, Aglaie, come to your room; Gustave will not be here to-night, and you must be calm, so you will be bright and fresh when he comes to-morrow. Come, dear, come!’

"She to whom Mrs. Desborough spoke now arose mechanically, and, without appearing to notice Mrs. Desborough or Aunt Teeny, proceeded

to the, to me, mysterious room, opposite the drawing-room. She walked with a slow, majestic, but saddened mien. I shall never forget her remarkable appearance.

"Mrs. Desborough and Aunt Teeny followed her. Uncle Cæsar, who had also been in the background, put out the lights, and the hall and drawing-room were in darkness. A light still remained in the strange lady's room, from which, a few moments after, Mrs. Desborough appeared. She carried a candle in her hand, which, lighting up her face, betrayed traces of agitation and tears.

"I descended the steps and went slowly to my usual entrance. The door was now unlocked, and I went directly to my room, without stopping at Mrs. Desborough's. I dreaded to see her, for involuntarily I had become possessed of a portion of her secret, and I feared the consequences.

"On awakening the next morning, my first thought was of the strange occurrence of the night previous, and, revolving it in my mind, I concluded there was but one course for me to pursue, and that was, to tell Mrs. Desborough all.

"Accordingly, after breakfast, as we were sauntering in the garden, gathering flowers, I did so. For some moments she did not speak—she was evidently startled and more than annoyed—she

was angry; but my candor had pleased her, and, after overcoming her first feelings, she led the way to an arbor near, and, between tears and sighs, told me the following sad tale:—

“‘Your father and mother,’ she said, ‘are the only persons outside this house, except the priest and physician, who know of the residence of my unfortunate sister in it, and of her condition. Your parents have kept the secret well. I feel sure that their daughter will follow their example.

“‘You know I have a married daughter. Brought up as she was in a convent, and on the plantation, she has no idea of my sister’s state, or of her living with me. She has heard of my sister, but, with the world, supposes her an inmate of the convent near the city, having, it is also believed, taken the black veil, on account of the great affliction of her life.

“‘My daughter is devotedly attached to her husband. Before my daughter’s marriage, I had always concealed the fact of my sister’s derangement, fearing it would affect my child’s worldly prospects; but since her marriage I have been even more careful to do so, for it was but a few days after that event, that I heard her husband declare, in a general conversation with some guests



on the subject of derangement, that no earthly consideration would induce him to marry into a family where there had ever been even a slight mental aberration, and that his prejudice was so strong on this subject, that even if a marriage had taken place, and such a fact as derangement in either family was discovered, he thought it was the duty of the contracting parties to annul it. This,' continued Mrs. Desborough, 'with the devoted affection I have for my sister, has been the cause of my peculiar mode of life.

"Twenty years ago, my sister was just eighteen years of age. Without exaggeration, I can say she was the most lovely being I ever saw. Her face and figure, which even now have not lost their roundness, were exquisitely moulded; every movement was grace, and her spirits were unceasingly exuberant. Wherever we went, at home or abroad, she was the life and soul of every one around her. I am several years her senior, but we were together in society, and married within a few weeks of each other.

"This house was our father's. My mother died just after our marriages. Our father was wealthy, and it was his delight to surround us with luxury and pleasure. Many times have these old walls and this garden rung with the merriment and

laughter of the gay throngs that have gathered here. We led the life of all rich belles.

“At eighteen, Aglaie, my sister, became engaged to the original of the picture before which you saw her sitting last night. Gustave—for that was his name—was all that the picture represents him to be, and his mind was worthy his person. He was of Spanish descent, and owned large possessions in Cuba.

“After an engagement of six months, Gustave and Aglaie were married. The wedding took place here, and was considered a grand affair. The diamonds you saw upon my sister last night were her husband's wedding gift.

“I never saw a more devoted husband than Gustave; he seemed but to live in Aglaie's presence. He was particularly fond of hearing her sing and play upon the harp; and the Spanish song you heard her sing was of his composition. She often sang it for him, while he sat near her, almost worshipping his idol.

“Six months after their marriage, he was suddenly called to Cuba, on business connected with his estate there. He expected to be gone a month, and, owing to the season of the year, he thought it better that Aglaie should not accompany him.

“The last evening that he passed with us, we

were all sitting in the old hall there, and he asked Aglaie to sing his favorite song. She complied with his request. When she had finished it, he exclaimed: 'Oh! darling, I think if I were a hundred miles away, or even in the depths of the sea, and you were to sing that song, I should hear your voice. Let me see,' he continued, as he calculated the time he was to remain in Cuba, 'let me see; I shall be back here a month from this time. Sing that song, at this hour, a month from to-night, darling, and see if it does not bring me to your arms.' It was then half-past eleven o'clock.

"The month passed. The night that we expected Gustave, Aglaie dressed herself as you saw her last night, and at the appointed hour she sang the song. Gustave did not come—he has never come. The vessel in which he sailed from Cuba was never heard of. But for twenty years Aglaie has dressed herself thus, and at half-past eleven o'clock, every night, she has sung her husband's favorite song.'

"But," said I, 'Mrs. Desborough, I do not call this a case of derangement.'

"You would," she replied, 'if you knew all. When she was told that the vessel was supposed to be lost, she did not mourn, or weep, or exhibit any of the ordinary expressions of grief, but a

cold, impassive look settled upon her face, which has never left it. She asked no questions; never does she allude to the subject in any way, only, night after night, week after week, and month after month, at the precise hour, she sings that song before her husband's picture.

“In the day-time she sits listlessly, or reads, or recites long passages from different poems.

“At first, and since, the physician has prescribed change of scene, but it was impossible to make her follow his advice; no inducement can tempt her to leave the house, where she thinks her husband may return any moment.

“Once, and once only, I entered her room as she was dressing for her evening song—it was shortly after her loss—and I tried to reason with her about it. She became almost wild with delirium; and since then I have never interfered with her. In fact, the physician has come to the conclusion that the life she leads is the only one in which she would be harmless. Taking her from here might make her a raving maniac.

“Aunt Teeny is almost always with her, to attend to her wants, which are simple and few, and, when you are not here, I am seldom absent from her. At night, when she commences her preparations, which is at about half-past ten, I am near.

if not immediately with her. She always insists that the house shall be brilliantly lighted when she enters the hall. Her health, of late, has been failing; so much so, that either I or Aunt Teeny assist her in stringing and tuning her harp. In fact, she is rapidly declining.'

"After my discovery regarding her sister, Mrs. Desborough appeared to have more pleasure in my presence. There was no restraint whatever between us. It was a relief to her, both mind and body, to be able to mention her trouble to some one.

"Every night she allowed me to remain down-stairs at the hitherto proscribed hour, saying, what I found to be true, that Aglaie would not notice me.

"One night, about a week before my return home, I remained as usual down-stairs. Mrs. Desborough had told me that day that her sister was becoming so feeble that it was with difficulty she crossed her room. I perceived that such was the fact, as she came from it, for both Mrs. Desborough and Aunt Teeny were supporting her; but, once in the chair, with her harp before her, and she appeared to receive new strength.

"As usual, she played several brilliant pieces, and when the hour of half-past eleven arrived she com-

menced her song. Her voice rose to such wild melody, as she neared the end of the last verse, that I was frightened. Her eyes assumed an unearthly brilliancy—the look of expectation in them was fearful. The song came to an end, but the look remained upon her face. Suddenly it changed to one of ecstatic joy—her lips parted, a cry escaped them, a long, thrilling, cooing cry, and these words:—

“Gustave! Gustave! at last, at last!”

“She rose from her chair, and started, with outstretched arms, towards the picture. Mrs. Desborough followed her in time to prevent her falling. There was another cry—a wail—but it was not from Aglaie; it was from Mrs. Desborough. It was a wail for the dead!

“Yes, the beautiful woman, whose whole life had been cast ashore for want of its ballast—love—had passed away to the blessed land where the ‘weary are at rest.’

“We could not grieve for her, for the ineffable smile, that still lingered on her face, proclaimed her trials over.

“She was buried quietly. The world supposed that she had died at the convent, and that Mrs. Desborough had received permission to place her remains in their family vault.

"At the end of the week I returned home, and Mrs. Desborough determined to go to her plantation, previous to joining her daughter in Europe, as she had decided to do.

"She sailed for that country soon after. We corresponded, and from her letters I judged she was contented and cheerful.

"Several years after, she took passage with her daughter's family on the ill-fated Arctic, and, with them, was lost.

"If any of the family were still living, I should not have told you this sad story."

We all exclaimed, when the Queen finished her story: "Why, Queen, we expected a very gay story from you, after your recent prohibition of sad ones. But we excuse your apparent inconsistency, for it was so interesting."

This is about as good a place as any to tell you about Sister Maddie, whose name I have before mentioned. She, like all of us, has been bereft of her home by the fortunes of war, and, like all of us, she tries to make the best of it. She is full of piety, gentleness, and sweetness, rendering kind deeds in such a way, that her right hand knoweth not what her left hand doeth. A woman such as

Dickens describes, "with a gentle voice, who never argues, but adjusts with a smile"—with a quiet, dignified beauty—a perfect wife and mother—such is Sister Maddie. When we next met, it was her turn to tell a tale, but her baby was taken sick with whooping-cough, and she would not leave it for a moment; so she sent us the following verses, which she had received from a friend, and promised us the story at some future time. The verses were written by the mother of a little lame child, after the child had asked her if she would be made straight in heaven:—

"Six years ago, my precious bud,  
Thy little life did ope;  
And in the garden of our hearts  
Thou sprungst, a beauteous hope.

'Thy bright blue eyes' exquisite hue,  
Thy hair in halo ringed  
About thy fair, angelic brow,  
And cheek so softly tinged.

"Not strange it was our fond delight  
Thy tiny form to deck;  
The blight that o'er thee since has fallen  
How little did we reck!

"At three years old—in one short hour—  
Thy lovely form was marred;



From childhood's ways, and childhood's sports,  
Thy infant years debarred.

" 'Twas then thy mother's heart, my child,  
Which vanity had filled,  
Purged, purged itself of that vile dross,  
And bowed—as heaven willed;

" And opened wide for thee, sweet one—  
Wide, and with thought serene,  
To make thy mind more beautiful  
Than form could be, I ween.

" Not beautiful for time alone,  
But for those endless ages  
When Form shall be but mould and dust,  
And Mind—sneer not, ye sages—

" Shall, towering, rise above all pelf  
Of earthly value given.  
Oh, child! in love, I'll teach thee so:  
Thou shalt be 'straight in heaven.' "

Pet left us, after the reading of the above lines, to sit with Sister Maddie, and help her nurse her sick baby, the noise of whose cries and whooping reached our ears. She succeeded in quieting him, for the cries ceased a few moments after she left us; and Queen, who went quietly to Sister Maddie's door, to see if she could be of any use, said that

the baby was sweetly sleeping in Pet's arms, and that the two looked more like Carlo Dolci's Madonna and child, than any thing she had seen since she saw the original at the Corsini Palace.

Our morning *réunions* were a good deal interrupted by all the children having taken the whoop-cough; for, I may say it even of myself, we were all devoted mothers, and never neglected our children for any thing; and the little ones needed constant nursing and care for some time.

The Gauls attributed one more quality to women than to men—they called it the "divine feeling." Is it not this "divine feeling" that makes mothers what they are—ready to sacrifice pleasure, comfort, every thing, for their children? I do not speak of what we did on this occasion as exemplifying this saying of the Gauls; I am only speaking generally—though often, in our circumscribed refugee homes, I have seen the feeling beautifully illustrated.

When our comforts were scarce, particularly beds and bed-clothing, I have seen a mother, in sickness, night after night, kneeling by the side of her child's bed, wrapped in a dressing-gown or shawl, and, with her head resting on the bed, she would sleep there, rather than lie down in

it, and occupy the space required for the restlessness of the sick child.

I know, when food became scarce and difficult to obtain, many of us fasted, that our little ones might not feel the pangs of hunger. We had read of incidents of this kind, but never imagined that we would illustrate them.

Our household is not the only refugee establishment in this far-off State. On the contrary, there are several others, and they are all on good terms.

There is the household down the road, whose presiding spirit is familiarly called by all the refugees Aunt Annie, and who is not, as this general appellation might suggest, an old maid, but a young and pretty married woman.

Then there is the household on the hill, whose blonde hostess captivates all hearts by her elegant manners, finished conversational powers, and exquisite taste in music. We call her our blonde beauty.

You must not think that there are not some disagreeable persons among us—that would not be natural;—but these we avoid, and, on the whole, the utmost harmony prevails.

The different households often mingle together; this is particularly the case when any of our

soldiers join us. Then we pass our time in the merry dance, or song, or in different games. We make it a rule never to receive the soldiers with lengthened and sad faces. Surely, we say, they have enough of the cares of life when in camp, or on the march; so now we must make merry, and kill the fatted calf. Neither do we add to their troubles by recitals of our own cares and privations, but every thing is made as agreeable as possible. In turn, they are invited to each house, and a general gala-time is made for them.

This will be particularly the case at Christmas, which is now not far off, for nearly all of us are expecting the return of loved ones. Queen's two fine boys and her husband are to be here; Pet's husband and brother; Sister Maddie's son—in fact, all are looking for some one, and already each heart and head is devising means of enjoyment and recreation for the coming guests, after their year's trials and so many hair-breadth 'scapes.

The storeroom of our household really savors of old times, and many an old dress is being renovated, to change off with the country folks for fat turkeys, eggs, and chickens. Egg-nog we cannot have, for every drop of liquor we obtain we save for the hospitals. The children are to have a Christmas Tree, and our brave boys a

"Merrie Christmas," despite the hard times, despite the blockade—bless their noble hearts!

I must not omit to mention two other fine amateur musicians we have among us, both from our beloved city. I have spoken of our blonde beauty—she excels in instrumental music—but the two I now mention are singers. They both received their musical education in New Orleans, where the taste is severe and exacting, and even there they were considered fine performers. I do not know how they would stand the test in Paris or Italy; I would like to see them bear it. One of the singers has a clear soprano voice, and her notes are as exquisitely liquid as Sontag's are said to have been; the other has a deep, rich, artistically modulated contralto. When these voices mingle in some of the gems of our favorite operas, I can assure you it is a great pleasure to listen to them, and in our contemplative moods, we think God has been good to us poor exiles, to afford us such sources of enjoyment during these weary war-days.

It has not been my intention to speak of the refugee gentlemen, although there are several who are worthy of mention, and who are always ready to aid in our efforts for the benefit of the poor

or the invalid soldier. But I will make one exception, in the case of a gentleman who is a poet, and who will, in my opinion, ere long become a prominent one. This is our friend the Judge. He has written some very fine poems, of which his "Ode to Shakspeare" is generally deemed the best. It has been mentioned in terms of high praise in some of the most prominent English newspapers, and by them declared to be genuine poetry.

Most of his pieces will bear the test of the closest criticism. There is no tinsel-like fancy in them, such as is indulged in by Owen Meredith and others, and which by the crowd is called imagination. There is true imagination in the poems of our friend, and without this there can be no true poetry. Then, in beauty and appropriateness of language, in the artistic finish to which each verse and each line is brought, they are admirable. He never makes his theme subservient to his rhythm, a power to which I wish more of our modern poets could attain.

Some of his poems are extremely metaphysical, and both he and some of his intimate friends consider them his best; but, to me, his simple heart-effusions are the truest evidence of his genius. Some of them are equal to any thing

that Shelley—the purest of English poets—ever wrote. The Judge is not always here; his duties in his own State keep him absent a large portion of the time; but we expect him to be present at our Christmas festivities.

His wife is lovely, just the wife for just such a man; appreciating, I might almost say adoring, her husband's talents. She is gentle and pious, and, at the same time, full of a quaint kind of *esprit*, the joy of her home, its light and its strength. The appellation of wif-man can be applied to her as well as to any one I ever knew, and when we consider the meaning of wif—in the old Saxon—which is woof, it is peculiarly significant.

The “Ode to Shakspeare,” to which allusion has been made, is, with a biographical outline of its author, contained in Duyckinck's Cyclopædia of American Literature, and hence readily accessible to my readers; but the briefer inspirations I have so warmly commended, may not be equally easy of reference, and I therefore subjoin one of them, entire :

#### A SOUVENIR.

I see her as I saw her then,  
While yet the golden haze  
That broods above the sweetest glen

Of summer, tinged her days—  
The white star of her morning, bright  
With beauty and with praise.

I see her as I saw her then—  
Beside the marble stair!—  
An orange sunset fires agen  
That orient opal, where  
A rich geranium's vivid red  
Burned in her braided hair!

The marble stair—twin-steps in air—  
Which rings a verdant rood;  
The moon-like urns of fragrance there;  
The breeze—the lake—the wood:  
And all her eyes alight with things  
Unsaid, but understood.

I see them shine as clear as dew,  
While thus my soul is cast,  
In tears, upon the tarnished blue  
That binds this ringlet fast:  
Oh! fairy-haunted bridge of dreams!  
Her first gift and—her last.

Our story-telling has not yet been resumed,  
though Christmas has come and gone—come and  
gone! Let us bless God for the comfort of it,  
and for being permitted to have had our loved  
ones with us. Alas! we know not what another



Christmas has in store for us or them. God grant they may be with us again! Perhaps—God spare us! God have mercy upon us!—they may be mouldering in the grave, in some far-off State! It is difficult to believe the grave can hush forever the “bursts of bright and tameless glee” that have rung from their unclouded souls; yet so it may be, and our hearts must be schooled for the worst in these fearful, fearful days—trusting, whatever sorrow overtakes us, in an all-merciful Providence, in whom I believe so faithfully, that, even were my heart-strings sundered by His dispensations, I could still say, “Thy will be done,” not doubting one instant, though suffering agony of agonies, at the loss of the dearest object on earth, that it was just and right; not doubting, either, that in the incomprehensible future, the intention of Divine Power will be made manifest.

And now I must record a few items of these merry Christmas days. Perhaps in after years, when my hair is gray, my step slow and infirm, little feet will patter around me, while little voices will beg grandma for stories about the fearful war when she was young. Then grandma can take out her manuscript, and while there will be horrors to relate, there will be records of her refugee

days, when, dressed in homespun, she made it into garments for their mother, then a child like themselves, but now a stately woman sitting near. She can also tell of the brave women who sustained, by their industry and cheerfulness, their husbands and brothers, who had gone forth to fight for what they conscientiously believed a just cause.

Pet came out in an entirely new character when her husband and brother arrived. Occasionally, she had given us specimens of humor, but we had never, for a moment, imagined that humor was one of the component parts of her character.

If any of us had been asked what was her chief characteristic, I think we would have said, an inclination to sadness. Now, however, she was all hilarity, wit, and joyousness. She was charming; even Queen was partially eclipsed by her brightness. There is a flower called the *Yuca Filamentosa*, that never blooms except by moonlight; disdaining all other influences, it only comes to perfection then. Pet was like this flower: she only displayed her full beauties under the influence of, and in, the society of her dearest loved ones. She sang, she played, she laughed, until we all caught the infection of her merriment.

The Judge wrote plays and charades, and his

lovely wife got them up, in their own house, with charming theatrical effect. And such magnificent costumes as we had! Why, even Marie Antoinette would not have rejected them at the Little Trianon. Where did you get them? you will ask. Why, Queen lent us all her magnificent dresses, laces, and jewels, which, as she said in her funny, independent way, she was glad of the chance of showing, for she would not venture to appear in them, in these days of homespun, for fear of being debarred genteel society.

Tableaux, too, we had; but our pleasantest *réunions* were at sociables or dinners. Sometimes we went in the best we had, sometimes in homespun.

The Christmas Tree—I must not forget *that*. It was beautiful; *Piffet* himself would have given a prominent place to it in his yearly Christmas shows. Where we found all the odds and ends to convert into fanciful articles for its decoration, is a mystery to me; but it was filled, well filled, and brilliantly lighted with *tallow dips*. There were rag dolls, and pasteboard cradles, pincushions, bags, and home-made candy for the children; cravats, tobacco-bags, and socks for the soldiers; and we laughed and talked, and were as happy over

it, as if it were hung with Maillard's best French *bonbons*, or Guion's most *recherché* toys.

Aunt Annie introduced all kinds of games for the children, but I think that we of older growth enjoyed them as much as they, even to the brave General, who had just returned from one of the most trying campaigns of the war.

Throughout the holidays, our musicians were in full voice and power. Our blonde beauty's music was the delight of our braves—they would go to her house at all hours of the day, to listen to her splendid symphonies and operas, all of which she tendered to them as their right, as, in fact, all the enjoyment was, that could be compressed into their short stay. She also gave us a charming *réunion*. To the world, our blonde beauty shows to the best advantage as a hostess. She possesses a faculty which all do not possess, and to which the French apply the term, *le juste milieu*. She finds this happy medium in all things. If she gives a dinner, her company is well assorted. She is equal to all occasions. I love her, but not for these things—I love her for her truthfulness, for her fervent heart, and for her many acts of personal friendship. Our blonde

beauty writes poetry, but this she tries to keep *sub rosa*.

Not one of us had a heart sorrow these merry Christmas days; not one of us had lost a friend by the war. True, our homes were desolated, but not our hearts; and, such being the case, we could still be cheerful:

The whole galaxy, with Queen at its head, moved in an atmosphere of harmony.

At last, one by one, our colonels and captains and privates bade us a sad but brave good-by, and, one by one, we locked ourselves in our rooms, with no eye, save God's, to witness the agony of our grief.

To-day Aunt Annie came to visit our household. She had heard we were all in "the dumps," and came over to cheer us. Queen was glad—as we all were—to see her, and declared we had bored her to death with our dolorous faces. Proud Queen! She did not know that her heart-breaking sobs had reached our ears the night she had told her brave boys good-by. •

Aunt Annie is a character. I wonder if I can describe her? I will try to tell you something of her, but fear I may fail if I attempt to describe her fully. If I begin by saying she is the most

unselfish being I ever saw, you won't understand her unselfishness, for we so often say that about persons without meaning they are as Aunt Annie is. If one believes in Scripture, and the verse referring to the casting of bread upon the waters, and if they know Aunt Annie, they will feel assured that she will never want for any thing as long as she lives, for she casts her bread continually, year in and year out. She never tires of it; and the peculiar beauty of this casting is, that she does not seem to think that she is doing any thing different from other persons.

Does one want a bottle of wine, a jar of preserves, a cake of soap,\* a spool of thread, or any thing more important, in Aunt Annie's hearing, Aunt Annie always manages to find the desired article somewhere.

Then Aunt Annie, not content with her own share of sorrow, which has been considerable, takes that of every one to heart. Truly, she "weeps with those who weep," and can never be happy

• \* A spool of thread and cake of soap, or even a bottle of wine and jar of preserves, may appear trivial articles to mention as gifts, but the reader must know that these things were considered luxuries, where a spool of thread cost twelve dollars, and a cake of soap from ten to fifteen dollars, according to quality, during the war.

when any of her friends are in distress of mind or body.

Her house might be said to be made of gutta percha,—it is never so full but that it can take in one more wounded soldier, or one more person distressed by the war.

One of the soldiers in the hospital told me, the other day, that he should never forget the first time he saw Aunt Annie.

A telegram received here had announced that the down-train would bring a number of wounded men, and the authorities called on the inhabitants to come forward for their relief. Aunt Annie was among the first to be at the *dépôt* when the train arrived.

Mattresses were laid on the platform on which to place the wounded men, but the number was not sufficient, and some of them were laid directly upon the hard floor.

One of my comrades, said the soldier, was placed thus next to the mattress on which I lay. He was so badly wounded in the arm that amputation was necessary. The blood was flowing from his wound, and there was every appearance of death upon his face. Aunt Annie, when she saw him, did not hesitate as to what course to pursue. She seated herself upon the dirty platform, and

gently raised the head of the wounded man upon her lap—he seemed to be dying.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, “if I could only save him. I know he has a mother, or a wife, or a sister, somewhere.”

She had a little basket by her side, and in it a tumbler, a spoon, and a vial of brandy. She mixed some of the brandy with water, making it weak at first, and began to trickle it, drop by drop, down the wounded man’s throat, for he could not swallow.

*For three hours* she sat thus—patient, prayerful, hopeful. “God blessed her efforts,” said the soldier, “for soon the wounded man began to revive—left to himself he would have died;—her patient efforts saved his life.”

This man’s arm was amputated. Aunt Annie nursed him for more than a month. Day after day she sent him such delicacies as it was possible to obtain, wrote his letters, and did every thing that her kind heart and Christian principles dictated.

The soldier, on recovering his health, was told he could be discharged. “Discharged!” said he, “never while such women (referring to Aunt Annie) are to be fought for. Discharged! I have one arm left, and while I have it it must do duty for my country.”



This is but one of the many instances of her devotion to the sick and wounded. Whenever she enters the hospitals, as is her custom every day, with her basket on her arm—I must say that sometimes it is a *tin pail*, if it does not sound so well—she is followed by the benedictions of the patients.

The ladies take their turn in visiting the hospitals. Some prudes think it “unwomanly, unladylike, entirely out of our sphere.” Could some of these prudes see the brightened look of the soldier as the lady nurse approaches, they might change their minds. I have never seen any thing to offend even the most fastidious in the hospitals. But I have seen many a sick soldier cheered, many a one improved, and some cured, by the kind, womanly nurse, who is ever thinking of something for his comfort—either inditing letters to his family, or tempting his weak appetite with something cooked at her own house, and which has not, as the soldiers express it, the hospital flavor.

Many a fever, too, have I seen allayed by the mesmeric soothing of a gentle nurse; ay, and many a soul converted to its Maker by the same womanly influence.

There are few persons who have a *spécialité* for a sick-room, few who can modulate their voices and steps to play in unison with the nerves of the

patient, or who understand how much of the sunlight of the outer world to bring into the room, and their conversation, to suit the eye and brain of the patient. Few Florence Nightingales, and those few, I am sure, are precious in the sight of Heaven, and beloved by the angels, no doubt. Art cannot make them; it is the spirit within, so sympathetic that it attunes itself naturally to the needs of suffering humanity.

The little grave-yard of our village needs no description, but I cannot help mentioning it, for I have a feeling that some of us may find it our last resting-place. It is a dreary place, and the care is not taken of it that should be. In one corner is a clump of trees, which casts a soft shade over that portion of the enclosure. I trust, if any of us do die here, we may be laid beneath this shade.

Pet, until to-day, when she received letters from her husband and brother, has been very gloomy—we could not rouse her into any thing like cheerfulness. True, she attended to her duties as promptly as ever, particularly the hospital ones, but it was with such a subdued mien that it was painful to see her. Poor child! if either of her loved ones fall in battle, the effect upon her will be woful.

Venetia talks us into forgetfulness of our trou-

bles very often. Not being fond of sewing, she has volunteered to read aloud while we are busy with our needles, so we have almost given up story-telling.

Last week she read Hawthorne's "Mosses from the Old Manse." We had read them, but they are so original, we enjoyed them as new.

His writings are unlike in style, in conception, and in ideality, any of the age. He is a poet without being a rhymester, and a metaphysician that can be understood—an anomaly, you will own. I mean, by my last remark, that he takes the most intricate phases of human nature and lays them bare, with a naturalness and a clearness that is unsurpassed. Many persons, speaking of his works, remark they do not fancy them, they are so strange. In that one word strange, they, if they did but know it, own their beauty and originality. Bacon has an apothegm, that all true beauty has a certain strangeness, and it is true.

Hawthorne's "Birth-Mark" is a powerful and true conception, as the slow wearing away of many a lovely woman's life can testify.

I wish that more persons, in writing, would be original. I wish they would not be afraid that the public will say, "strange, strange," but write down their own true conception of things, in their

own language. The public may wonder, at first—may say, strange, but it will end by saying—this is original—we like it.

Is there any thing more than the halo of antiquity around the old classic lore? Has genius scattered its broadest, brightest, greenest leaves on its first aspirants, leaving but withered ones for these latter days; or is it that our modern writers depend too much on the style of others, and too little on their own innate power of conception, that they produce so little that is truly original?

Of late, on Sundays, Sister Maddie has been reading "Cumming's Sermons" to us, the celebrated expounder of the Apocalypse; and, though this divine is not of our Mother Church, in whose doctrines I have been rigidly brought up, I have been greatly edified by his sermons. They have made me think as I never have thought before, and have brought heaven so near to view, that it is no longer as a distant, undefinable, incomprehensible future, but it is a near home. I see its streams, I catch the swelling tones of its glorious symphonies, and pray, most humbly, that when my pilgrimage on earth is ended, I may be permitted to join the angel throngs of whom the writer discourses so beautifully. He preaches Christ, and Him crucified, as only one can preach Him who

loves Him. He may be wrong in many of his views; and, in his earnest desire to bring all within the great Shepherd's fold, he sometimes wafts the wings of fancy too strongly, but whatever he says has an exalting tendency.

I once attempted to read Spurgeon, but found no answering chord to my own religious sentiment. I believe in a Christ who says, "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden," not in one who points the finger of wrath and damnation. Perhaps I am prejudiced from having once read some very coarse specimens of Spurgeon's so-called clerical wit, which, according to my ideas, was not compatible with the spirit of true religion, or the refined and elevated tone from which its teachers should never depart.

But, I promised you Sister Maddie's story—so here it is.

## SISTER MADDIE'S STORY;

OR,

LÉOLINE AND ROSALINE.

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WHEN I was ten years old, there came to reside with us a friend of my mother—an unmarried lady of about my mother's own age, twenty-eight years—named Léoline Marchmont. I remember, now, the immediate and deep impression she made upon me by her peculiar beauty and grace, and particularly by the expression of her large, sad hazel eyes. The first opportunity that I had after her arrival, I questioned my mother respecting her, and why so beautiful a lady did not marry. I received the following reply :

“She was to have been married several years since, but, for reasons you cannot understand, the engagement was broken. Apart from this fact, her life has been singularly sad—she has but one living relation in the world, from whom she is severed by peculiar circumstances. Let us do all that we can,

now she is with us, to make her happy, or, at least, contented."

"Mother," I still inquired, for I was an inquisitive child, "who is this only relation?"

"I cannot tell you," she replied. "Question me no more; it is a subject that Léoline never speaks of, neither must you."

Of course my curiosity regarding her was increased tenfold by this reply, and my interest also. I soon attached myself to the beautiful Léoline, and we became devoted to each other. I was the only one who could drive the sad look from her face, and once I astonished the family by making her laugh heartily at some of my childish pranks.

One night—she had been with us then about two months—I, among other members of the family, was startled from sleep by a loud shriek. The cause of it I never knew until many years after, though the next day I was told by my mother that Léoline had a sister, who had arrived suddenly the night before; that she was ill in Léoline's room, and probably would die.

She did die, and was buried from our house. Léoline wore the deepest mourning for her, and for a long time was very, very sad. I cannot say she was sadder than before her sister's death, for, on the contrary, I remember hearing my mother say,

that while she deplored her sister, she was evidently relieved from a great weight of woe, and that she entered upon the every-day duties of life in a more natural and cheerful manner. This was unaccountable to me then, but many years after, when I was grown, and I heard Léoline's story from her own lips, it was explained.

I will relate her story as if she herself were telling it, adding here, that a year after her sister's death, she married a distinguished member of Congress, from a neighboring State, and that she is still a beautiful woman, and adored by her husband :

"There were three children in our family," said Léoline—"my twin sister Rosaline and my brother George, who was four years our senior. Our mother died when we were very young, and my father procured the services of a person, named Mrs. Esterby, to take charge of and to teach us.

"Our father owned large possessions on the Mississippi River, and we were brought up amidst comfort and luxury.

"Our house was in a wealthy neighborhood, and the constant resort of the gay families around us; and, in return, we were often taken by our over-indulgent father to their houses, dressed in the most costly and lavish style, and petted and caressed to our hearts' content. We would have been utterly



ruined and spoiled, had it not been for the care and judicious attention of Mrs. Esterby, who proved a most conscientious and excellent friend and teacher. She had been finely educated in every way, and, wild and spoiled as we were, she managed to instil a great deal of her knowledge into us, and to adorn us with her accomplishments.

"I have said that Rosaline and myself were twins. There was between us that very peculiar sympathy which is said to exist between all twins; but in disposition and in character we were totally unlike. Our appearance was not strikingly alike. I, as you can see, have brown hair and hazel eyes—her eyes were as blue as the sky, and her hair light, and it clustered in close curls to her beautifully shaped head, as you have seen hair in antique paintings. Persons said that our expression and other features were alike—though the shade of the hair and eyes was so different—but we could not see it. All the family thought Rosaline the most beautiful. She was, while the most affectionate creature I ever saw, the most passionate also. So affectionate was her disposition, that, even in the midst of the most frantic exhibition of temper, a word of loving tenderness would dispel the evil spirit at once, and with loving words and streaming eyes, if it were to me, or Mrs. Esterby, or to my father, or George,

she had shown it, she would sue for our love and pardon.

"This temper was a source of great uneasiness to Mrs. Esterby, and she often counselled Rosaline in the most loving manner respecting it, and besought her to curb it; and my sister, poor dear child, would promise her that she would try. It was touching to see her contrition. Would to God she could always have been under good Mrs. Esterby's guidance, then I would not have this sad tale to tell! But, alas! it was ordered otherwise. Truly, the ways of God are inscrutable, and past finding out.

"We were fifteen years of age when my father died—insolvent. It is singular with what calmness we learn to speak of the most heart-rending afflictions of our lives. It was a most direful calamity to us. We had but one relation in the world—a half sister of my father's—a wealthy woman, living on Red River, and to whom a great part of my father's estate was mortgaged. There had never existed any great degree of good feeling between my father and his sister, and the few times that we had seen Mrs. Monson—for that was our aunt's name—we had conceived the greatest aversion for her.

"She was a tall, dark, imperious woman, with a

certain set of peculiar, illiberal ideas, in which her mind revolved, and from which it was never known to radiate, except when her own selfish interests made it convenient; then it would assert itself in any tangent necessary to accomplish her ends. She was cold, calculating, and forbidding.

“When she came to our house, immediately after our father’s death, even our very grief was hushed before her, so chilling was her presence; and when we found that it was to her care we were to be committed, that we must leave our loved home, our dear Mrs. Esterby—for our aunt would not permit her to accompany us—we were nearly frantic with despair.

“George, our brother, was but nineteen years old; but, dear, noble boy, he displayed the energy and decision of maturer years. Gathering the little means he could, he came to us, and said: ‘My sisters—my darling sisters, do not grieve so; go quietly with your aunt; bear your life with her as well as you can for a year or two, it shall not be longer. I am young and strong—I have made up my mind to start immediately for California. There I will retrieve our fortunes; and I mistake myself and my love for you, if ere long I do not relieve you from Mrs. Monson’s thralldom, and place you in a home of our own.’

"Thus he spoke, and went forth; and we, heart-broken and desolate—with not even our own maids with us to remind us of our home—took passage with Mrs. Monson for her plantation on Red River.

"There are no words that can convey to another the utter desolation of our lives at that place. Who and what the neighbors were I know not, for they never came to visit Mrs. Monson. We were there six months before we saw any one besides herself, the negroes, or a passing traveller.

"Mrs. Monson had been a widow many years, and had no children.

"The house was dilapidated and gloomy, and from morning until night it was as quiet as the grave—even the birds of the air, as if awed by the spirit of reserve and gloom that clung to every thing, seemed to hush their glad song as they approached its precincts.

"If we had had books, or a piano, or any thing to change the monotony, our lives would have been more endurable; but there was, literally, nothing to change the current of our thoughts, which were sad enough. Nor were we permitted to spend the little pocket-money left us by our brother for any thing that could have conduced to our pleasure.

"The only things that spoke to us of a different life were the steamboats passing along the river, and which occasionally stopped at the landing-place in front of the house to take in wood or cotton. We were not permitted to walk to the landing when the steamboats were there—it was not considered genteel by Mrs. Monson—but we would gaze at them with longing eyes, wishing they had come to bear us from our hated domicile. Visitors never came in the boats, as they had done in our own loved, lost home.

"Once we asked for a patch of ground in the flower-garden to cultivate according to our own taste—it was refused with a cold surprise. We never asked for any thing again in that house.

"Months passed by, we tried not to show our discontent, hoping and believing, with child-like faith, that George would soon come, and that then we would be happy. But a year rolled by with leaden wings, and we did not even hear from him; then, indeed, we were miserable.

"Rosaline had borne up under the sad circumstances of our lives far better than I had dared to hope; true, she had my love, as I had hers, but she had been so petted and so loved, by my father, by Mrs. Esterby, by George, and by every one, that I feared that, with her craving for constant

and universal love, she would succumb under such pressure.

"Every day I feared that her passionate spirit would vent itself upon Mrs. Monson, who made use of every opportunity to impress upon us the knowledge of our dependent condition.

"Mrs. Monson never troubled herself as to how we passed the long hours of the day. She sat in her room, to which she never invited us, when she was not attending to her plantation—for she was her own overseer. She had no sympathy whatever with our condition. We were therefore very much surprised when she said to us one day at the dinner-table, 'Girls, if you are fond of reading, you will find a trunk of books in the garret.'

"We were so startled by the kindness of the remark, and so delighted at the prospect of obtaining something to read, that we could hardly syllable forth our thanks; and no sooner had we finished our dinner than we went in search of the coveted treasure.

"When I think now of what we found, and what we read, it makes me shudder, that such works are still in the world, to bring to ruin many an otherwise innocent being.

"The trunk was full of licentious novels of the worst French school, not one of which should

have been allowed to fall into the hands of girls of our age.

"Day after day we passed over these pernicious books, losing the thought of our very existence in the wild, unreal, and voluptuous scenes they pictured.

"While I enjoyed the books, as they served to pass away so many of the hitherto dreary hours, I can sincerely say that with me they made no lasting impression. It was not so, however, with Rosaline. I saw this, and felt it at the time; but I was neither old enough, nor wise enough, to imagine the evil that they might (alas! that they did) help to produce. She was imaginative, and all was as real to her in those books as her own existence.

"I remember the first time she ever gave expression to her thoughts respecting them. She had just finished reading one of the most exciting, glittering, and hollow of them all. She sat pensively gazing out towards the river, over whose waters the sun was casting its last crimson rays. I spoke to her several times before she heeded me, so absorbed was she in her own imaginings; when she did answer me, it was in a pettish, listless manner, very unlike her usual one; for, though she was of a passionate nature, she had nothing of meanness or littleness in her character or ways. She was sorry for her tone

to me, immediately, and throwing her arms lovingly about me, she exclaimed :—

“‘Oh! Léoline, do you never dream of the great world outside—of its excitements, its joys, its pleasures? Are we ever to live as now—stagnating, as it were, in all our youth and beauty—with no one to love us, to caress us, as the beautiful women in these books were loved and caressed? Let us go from here; let us put an end to this miserable life; let us go forth and seek our own fortunes. We are beautiful, we are accomplished, we can make friends. George may never come, and, oh! think, think of the golden hours we are losing.’

“She paused. It was some moments before I could answer her, I was so shocked by her words, and by her earnestness. My silence seemed but to give her new impetus, and more and more wildly she urged me to listen to her proposition to go forth and seek the world, and what, poor, poor child, she firmly believed it to be its innocent pleasures.

“When I was composed enough to answer her, I could only ejaculate, between tears and sobs, my horror at her thoughts, and, in words of affection, beseech her to dismiss them.

“‘Oh!’ I said, ‘Rosaline, darling, let us be all in all to each other. Brother George must come soon,



and he will make us a pleasant home somewhere, and, under his protection, we can go into the world, and taste its joys and pleasures. Do not, do not, Rosaline, let such wild schemes take possession of your mind. Let us bear our dreary life as well as we can. George will surprise us some day, when we least expect him.'

"'Ah!' said Rosaline, 'perchance some witching woman holds him in chains, as women held their lovers in these books; think you then that he will come back to us? Never, never, under the influence of such love; sisters, duty, every thing is forgotten.'

"Alas! I dared not own the impression her last words made upon me; but I wronged my noble brother.

"After this conversation, Rosaline often talked in the same strain, particularly after Mrs. Monson had been more than ordinarily unkind and dictatorial, and would threaten to leave the house by herself; but the idea that she would carry her threat into execution never for a moment gained credence in my mind. Alas! she never, never would have done so, had it not been for a most outrageous act on the part of that vile woman, Mrs. Monson. Whatever sin may have come upon my poor sister, lies at that woman's door; and, on the last great day, God will call her to judgment for it.

"I must premise a little before telling you of the act that induced my sister to take the desperate step she did.

"My mother was a strict Catholic, and we had been baptized in her faith. On her death-bed, my father, who professed no religion, though a Christian at heart, promised her that we should be strictly brought up in her faith. He kept his promise, and for that reason chose Mrs. Esterby, who was of the same Church, for our teacher.

"Mrs. Monson clung to no particular creed, but declared herself liberal to all, except the Roman Catholic; and, like many other persons, ignorant entirely of the Catholic Church and its teachings, was loud and bitter in her denunciations of it.

"We, knowing this, took good care never to mention our religion before her; and, fearing her violent and overbearing temper, we also kept the symbols of it beyond her reach and sight, fearing that she would, as she had, in fact, threatened to do, deprive us of them.

"We each had a beautiful gold and carnelian rosary, given to us by our father on one of our birth-days, and, every night and morning, we repeated our prayers upon it, as we had been taught to do since our childhood, before a crucifix. All day the crucifix was locked in our trunk — some-

times we put our rosaries with it; at others, we put them in our pockets.

"One day—we had then been with Mrs. Monson for over two years, and, during that time, we had not been cheered by one word from George—Rosaline and myself were walking up and down the gravel walk in front of the house, talking, as was our daily habit, of George, and deploring his protracted absence, when suddenly we were startled by the loud, commanding tones of Mrs. Monson—who had come out of the house on to the piazza—ordering Rosaline to come instantly to her.

"We advanced towards Mrs. Monson, I trembling with fear, but Rosaline with a defiant look and firm step, which she could not help assuming whenever Mrs. Monson addressed her in tones like those she then used.

"When we came near to Mrs. Monson, she pointed, with a withering look of scorn, towards Rosaline's pocket, from which hung accidentally—and, oh, how fatally!—her rosary.

"'Give me,' Mrs. Monson demanded, in loud, imperious, insulting tones, 'give me that vile trumpery hanging from your pocket. Girl, how dare you desecrate my house with the idolatrous trappings of your vile sect!'

"Rosaline did not move, but her face was perfectly livid with passion.

" 'Take it if you can,' she said; 'give it to you, I never will.'

"Then, with kindling eye, and words which gathered vituperative passion as she found language, she poured out the torrent of her long pent-up spirit. Poor, poor darling! it was fearful to see and hear her; but, if wrath is ever justifiable, hers was then—poor, poor darling!

"I stood by, aghast and powerless. Mrs. Monson laughed a sardonic laugh in Rosaline's face; and, calling to two strong negro women, bade them hold my sister until she secured the rosary.

"I sprang forward to prevent such an insult to my sister; but what could two weak girls do against the combined strength of these two women?

"I succeeded, however, in rescuing the rosary; and, even before Rosaline cried out to me, 'Run, run with it, sister, to the river,' I had started for that purpose. Like lightning, I sped through the open gate, and, holding the rosary by the cross, I hurled it into the river. The cross fell at my feet, while the remaining portion of the rosary was lost in the swift-running waters. I took it up, and hid it in my bosom, knowing that Rosaline would be

thankful for even this part of it, and hurried back to the house.

“Oh, God! the sight that met my eyes, even now, I cannot think of with calmness. The same individuals stood upon the piazza; but in Mrs. Monson’s hand was a whip, and on my sister’s fair cheek was the mark of its sting.

“I took Rosaline by the hand and led her into the house—returning to the piazza, I, too, poured forth a torrent of reproaches.

“‘Take care, take care, girl,’ said Mrs. Monson, ‘or you too will share in your sister’s chastisement.’

“She raised the whip towards me as she spoke, but she did no more—whether her fury had spent itself, or she felt she had already gone too far, I do not know—but I said something about George, and that she should answer for her conduct to him.

“‘Your brother,’ she answered, coldly and carelessly, ‘your brother died some months since. I saw the notice of his death in a New Orleans paper.’

“I hardly know how we passed the remainder of that fearful day. Rosaline frightened me, there was such a wild and yet determined expression upon her frightfully white face. If she would only have talked of our new grief, and of the outrageous conduct of Mrs. Monson, I would not have felt so

uneasy, but the perfect silence she maintained was fearful.

"At an early hour we retired. Rosaline did not kneel with me, as it was her custom to do, to say her prayers, until I begged her; then she only knelt to satisfy me; I am sure she did not pray.

"It was a long time before I could sleep, but finally exhausted nature claimed its rights, and I sank into a deep slumber.

"The last thing that I remember seeing that night—for there was a bright moon, and its light made objects as visible as day in our room—was my sister lying beside me, with her large blue eyes stretched wide open, gazing, as if into vacancy, with the same wild, determined expression in them that they had had since morning. Her hand was in mine. Thank God! that my last act that night was to throw my arms around her, and kiss her bruised cheek and pallid lips and brow.

"When I waked in the morning, with the instant consciousness of some great weight of woe upon me, a feeling which all have experienced who have passed through great affliction, my first definite thought was of my sister. Putting out my hand to touch her, I found she was not in the bed. I raised myself, and looked eagerly about the room. She was not in it. The truth, that she had fled,

instantly flashed across my mind, sending the blood so quickly through my heart that it beat with agonizing fear.

“Upon the table was a piece of paper—I clutched it with trembling hand, with scarcely the power to read the following words pencilled upon it:—

“‘SISTER DARLING:—I believe I am crazed, but I do not know. Brother George is dead. One of us must go forth to seek another home. I am more fitted for it than you. If in two weeks you do not hear from me, telling you to join me, believe I am dead.

“‘Your own

“‘ROSALINE.’

“Besides the little money we had, Rosaline had taken nothing save the suit of mourning that she usually wore, a change of linen, and the golden cross which had been attached to the fatal rosary.

“I will not dwell upon my own feelings during this sad period of my life. I only wonder that my reason did not give way. I feared to leave Mrs. Monson’s to search for Rosaline, as she might return there or send for me at any moment.

“When the fact of my sister’s departure forced itself upon Mrs. Monson, I think she was frightened.

She caused search to be made for her, but ascertained nothing.

"A boat had wooded at the landing about four o'clock on the morning of my sister's departure—the negroes, if they knew its destination, would not tell it. Many years after, I heard from my sister's own lips that the two women, who had held her at Mrs. Monson's command in the morning, had assisted her in escaping.

"Two weeks rolled slowly past—three—four 'dragged' their 'slow length along,' and still there came no letter from Rosaline bidding me to join her. Alas, alas! I mourned, believing her dead.

"It was six weeks after her departure, when, one morning, as I was sitting on the steps of the piazza, brooding mournfully over the fate of my poor sister, my face in my hands, and too listless even to watch the steamboat that had stopped at the landing and was now pushing off, that my ear caught the sound of footsteps coming up the gravel-walk in front of the house, and then of a well-known voice. I started up wildly. Good God! advancing towards me, in life, in health, was my brother George. The joy, the shock was more than I could bear, and I fell senseless to the ground.

"Let me pass rapidly over the scene that took place between Mrs. Monson and my brother, when



all was made known to him. If the curses of the righteous avail any thing, she is a lost and doomed soul. His last words to her, as he took me from the house, the very day of his arrival there, were:—  
‘Madam, human law may not reach you; but there is a higher one, and to it and your own conscience—if any thing as pure as conscience exists in your inhuman heart—I leave you.’

“My brother had returned rich—rich enough to buy back our own fair home, if he had wished; but that was not his or my object now. Our object was to seek the wide world through, until we found our darling Rosaline; then, and not until then, could come to us the halcyon days of old, and of which my poor sister had dreamed so much during our weary life at Mrs. Monson’s.

“For two years we sought for Rosaline, and found her not. Advertisements were placed in all the leading newspapers of this country and of Europe. Some were headed ‘Léoline and Rosaline;’ others, ‘Léoline and brother George,’ thinking that, in this way, they would attract my sister’s attention, if she were living.

“Then we travelled through both countries ourselves, seeking her everywhere; but we never discovered the slightest trace of her.

“Mrs. Esterby, who had been in Europe during ..

our miserable life at Mrs. Monson's, and whose letters, like those of brother George, had, by some unaccountable reason, never reached us, now returned to New Orleans. My brother purchased a residence there, and Mrs. Esterby came to live with us.

"Though we had almost learned to look upon Rosaline as dead, we could not rid ourselves of the thought that she might be living, and, perhaps, in poverty and distress; and, though we mingled in the gay society of the city, and entertained our friends, the canker of grief was ever at our hearts.

"My brother entered into large commercial speculations, and, in a few years, became one of the richest men in the State; but, oh! we often remarked to each other, 'What, what does this wealth avail, if Rosaline is in misery?'

"At the age of twenty-three, I became engaged to a Mr. Fortescue. He did not seek me for my wealth, for his own was large—he loved me. He was very handsome, and of a distinguished appearance. He was ten years older than I, and a widower. My love for him was true as ever felt by woman for man, and he was worthy of it.

"Our marriage was fixed for a certain time, when my brother died;—again I speak calmly of a heart-

rending affliction. Much sorrow teaches one to speak thus. He left me his heiress.

"My marriage was postponed, at first, for only six months; but, during that time, Mr. Fortescue was called unexpectedly to Europe, and it was put off indefinitely.

"Eight months after my brother's death, Mrs. Esterby proposed that we should travel to the North, for the summer, to which I consented; for I was very sad, and needed a change of scene.

"Mr. Fortescue, who was still in Europe, proposed in his letters, which I received frequently, and which were all that my saddened, loving heart craved, to meet me in New York by the middle of October.

"Mrs. Esterby and myself passed the summer in one of the interior villages of New England, and at a very quiet, unfashionable, but pleasant watering-place, on the shore of one of the same States, wishing to avoid the dissipation of larger and more frequented places. Consequently we heard little, in fact, nothing, of the notabilities of the gay world.

"In October we established ourselves at a fashionable hotel in New York, filled, as usual, at that season of the year, with many of our Southern friends. By the middle of the month Mr. Fortescue joined us.

"My heart bounded with joy as he pressed me fondly in his arms, calling me by all manner of loving and endearing names. We were very happy—so happy that the many sorrows of my life were almost obliterated.

"Our wedding-day was fixed for the middle of the coming winter, and many and costly were the gifts that my betrothed presented to me.

"We became more confidential than we had ever been—he knew all my sorrows. I had never asked him until now if he had had many. One day I did so, and he answered me thus:—

"*'Léoline, I have never spoken to you of my former marriage. I was not happy in it. I loved my wife very much, but she proved unworthy of that love and of my respect. I was divorced from her. She is now dead. Forgive me, if I say that you sometimes remind me of her, especially by the tones of your voice. She was an English girl, and her name was Augusta May. When she proved unworthy of my love it was a sad blow to me, but I cast her from my thoughts, and no other since then, save thee, my Léoline, has occupied my heart for a moment.'*

"I had not been into public at all since my brother's death, but this fall there was a famous opera troupe performing in New York, and, at Mr.

Fortescue's earnest solicitation, I consented to attend it, if he could procure a curtained box.

"He did so without any difficulty—so we went one evening, in company with some Southern friends, from whom, however, we parted at the door of the theatre, as they were in full dress, and were going to some of the open boxes.

"As we stood in the parlor of the hotel, before starting, one of the party remarked that the beautiful English widow, Mrs. Brunswick, who had created such a *furor* at Saratoga and Newport, during the Summer, had arrived in the city, and had taken a magnificent residence up-town, and that the *élite* were flocking to see her. The party also remarked, that she had heard that the same lady was to be at the opera that night.

"The opera was very fine; our position was such that we had a full view of the stage, but we could not discern the audience unless we turned and drew aside a curtain. This for some time we did not care to do—we were so entranced by the music, the scenery, and so happy within ourselves.

"It was not until the first long interlude, that I said to Mr. Fortescue, 'Have you no desire to look out at the gay audience, and especially upon the beautiful widow, Mrs. Brunswick, of whom we hear so much?'

"Answering me in the same playful tone, Mr. Fortescue turned towards the curtain and drew it to one side. He placed his *lorgnette* to his eyes, and glanced around the house. A moment afterwards the *lorgnette* fell from his hand, and when I looked into his face, which was now turned towards me, it was as white as marble.

"'Clarence, Clarence!' I said, calling him for the first time in my life by his Christian name, 'what has happened?'

"He could not answer; his lips worked convulsively, but brought forth no sound. I took his hand; it was like ice.

"'Tell me,' I said, 'Clarence, dear Clarence, are you ill?'

"Then he seemed to recollect himself, and murmured something about the unexpected sight of an acquaintance, whom he had supposed dead; then saying to Mrs. Esterby and myself that he would return in a few moments, he left the box.

"Mrs. Esterby looked at me, and I knew, by her expression, that she feared I was to have some new grief, and through Fortescue; but I did not think so. I thought only that something peculiar had occurred, and that I should have a full explanation of it when Fortescue returned.

"Curiosity very naturally induced Mrs. Esterby

and myself to turn towards the audience, to see if we could fathom the mystery.

"I saw our gay Southern friends, in their rich toilettes, and Fortescue among them. He was speaking to a gentleman of the party, and directing his attention to another box, and apparently inquiring something about its inmates.

"I followed the direction of his eyes, and beheld, in a box gorgeously fitted up with hangings of crimson velvet and gold, a superbly dressed woman, her arms, her neck, and a profusion of golden curls sparkling with diamonds.

"Her face was not directly towards me, but as far as I could judge of her *tout ensemble*, without seeing the face, she was beautiful.

"She was chatting gayly with those around her, who seemed to listen to her with a deference usually bestowed upon superiors.

"In a few moments the opera recommenced. I saw the fair-haired lady give an imperious wave of her fan, as if to silence her companions; I saw them leave the box. I turned to look at Fortescue. He was still gazing intently, with a gloomy and mournful expression, at the fair-haired lady. She had now turned her face, so that I could see it, and, as I gazed upon her a second time, my eyes were riveted with mesmeric power upon her.

"I clutched Mrs. Esterby's hand, who was looking in the same direction as myself.

" 'Is it—is it?' I gasped forth, 'is it my long-lost sister? Is it Rosaline?'

" 'It is,' said Mrs. Esterby, and I fell senseless in her arms.

"It must have been some time before I recovered, for the opera was nearly over when I opened my eyes, and found Mrs. Esterby and Mr. Fortescue bending over me; the latter chafing my hands, while the former was making use of the restoratives she carried about for me—as she was well aware of my liability to faint. Fortunately, she had drawn the curtains of our box, when I had first seen Rosaline, so that we were not observed by the audience. Mr. Fortescue had but just returned; he was questioning Mrs. Esterby as to the cause of my sudden indisposition.

" 'Go to her—go to her, Fortescue; bring her to me,' I cried. 'I am too weak to go to her—bring her to me.'

" 'To whom, of whom, and what, are you talking, Léoline?' answered Fortescue.

" 'Of my sister—my long-lost sister—my Rosaline. Go to her—bring her to me.'

" 'Where is your sister?' he asked, in a bewildered manner, and thinking me *distracte*.



“‘The lady over there,’ I cried, pointing in the direction in which I had seen Rosaline; ‘the light-haired lady with the diamonds in her hair. You were looking in her box—the box with crimson and gold. She is my sister—bring her to me.’

“‘My God!’ he ejaculated. ‘What does she mean, Mrs. Esterby?’

“‘Mr. Fortescue,’ said Mrs. Esterby, ‘it is even as Léoline says. The lady in the theatre is surely Rosaline Marchmont—Léoline’s long-lost sister.’

“‘Merciful Father!’ said Fortescue. ‘This is misery, indeed,’ and he sank into the seat beside me and wept like a child.

“I know not if the occupants of the adjoining boxes heard us. I knew not, nor cared not, then; the music was loud; they may not have done so. There is many a tragedy enacted in the very eyes of the world that it does not see.

“I was bewildered by Fortescue’s actions. I could not understand them. They did not affect me, though he seemed in great mental agony, as they would have done under other circumstances. I could think of nothing but my sister. She was alive—she was near me—soon she would be in my arms. I was irritated at last by Fortescue, and asked angrily why he did not go to her, and bring

her to me; and I advanced towards the door of the box to go to her myself.

“‘Stay,’ said Fortescue, as I did so. ‘Mrs. Brunswick, if she is your sister, has left the theatre.’

“‘Let us follow her,’ I said, excitedly. ‘I cannot rest until I have her safe in my arms.’

“He followed rather than led the way through the theatre to the carriage at the door. ‘Drive to Mrs. Brunswick’s,’ I said to the driver. ‘Mrs. Brunswick, the English lady—do you know her place of residence?’ The driver answered in the affirmative. ‘Drive to it as quickly as you can,’ I said.

“Fortescue seemed as in a dream. I had never seen him behave so strangely. He was master of himself on all occasions. Those words, ‘what misery! what misery!’ would every now and then burst from his lips. I did not ask him what those words meant. I began to feel that there was misery somewhere. Yes, in all the joy that filled my heart, at the prospect of once more folding my long-lost sister in my arms, I felt the shadow of a great grief hanging over me, and that grief was separation from Fortescue. I remembered now his conversation respecting his wife—of her being like me—and his words, ‘*She was not worthy of my regard.*’ Oh, merciful God! had my sister been his wife, and

was not she, my pure Rosaline, worthy his regard? What—what must I think!

“We arrived at Mrs. Brunswick’s house. I sprang from the carriage, followed by Mrs. Esterby. A flight of marble steps were before us, my foot was on the first step, when I heard Fortescue call my name. I turned and went to him—he was still in the carriage.

“‘Come into the carriage a moment, Léoline,’ he said, ‘I must speak to you alone.’

“I did so, for my impatience was somewhat calmed, and the agony of his voice affected me to the heart.

“‘Léoline,’ he said, as I seated myself by his side, taking his cold hand in mine, ‘Léoline, there is one in that house who will separate us forever—I thought she was dead. When you know all, you will forgive me, and grieve for me. Let me fold you in my arms once more—press your lips to mine for the last time—and oh, my God! farewell to happiness forever.’ Thus speaking he kissed me fondly, and folding his arms about me he said, ‘The Lord bless thee and keep thee, Léoline, forever.’ He lifted me from the carriage, and telling Mrs. Esterby he would await us in it, that lady and myself ascended the steps.

“Lights shone from several windows in the house,

and a servant answering our summons immediately, showed us that the inmates had not retired.

"When Mrs. Esterby asked for Mrs. Brunswick, the servant replied that he did not know whether she would receive any visitors at so late an hour—in fact, he believed she had retired.

"‘She will see me,’ I exclaimed. ‘I know she will see me.’ He then made no further objection, but, throwing open the drawing-room doors, he bade us enter.

"Mrs. Esterby did so ; but I, borne on the wings of love, flew past him, up the broad staircase, through rooms of costly elegance and style, until I came to the front ones, which I presumed my sister occupied. A servant was near—‘Which is Mrs. Brunswick’s room?’ I said. She pointed to the door nearest to me, and I entered it.

"Crouched on the floor, in all the brilliant attire in which she had appeared so gay at the opera, her hair dishevelled, her whole attitude bespeaking complete despair, was my sister. She turned towards me as I opened and shut the door—she started wildly from the floor. I sprang to her, calling her by her old, endearing pet names. ‘Léoline—Léoline,’ she cried, with a wild shriek, ‘I thought you were dead.’

"Let me pass quickly over the revelations of that

night. Far better would it have been had I never found my sister, or, rather, that she had died, as we had so long supposed. But I will give you her story in her own words, or as nearly as I can recollect them. She told it with much agitation, and at my feet—sometimes laughing hysterically, at others weeping wildly—never kissing me once, as in the olden time. But when I attempted to kiss and fondle her she would sadly say, ‘No—no. You are too pure, Léoline; touch me not. I am a vile and sinful creature.’

“‘When I left Mrs. Monson’s house,’ said Rosaline, ‘I went directly to New Orleans. God knows that when I did so the intention and the act were pure. I remained there a week, at an obscure boarding-house, to which I was directed by a passenger on the boat. During that week I sought for employment, but unsuccessfully. At the end of that time, I was one day looking over a newspaper, to see if among the advertisements I might not see something to my advantage, when my eye fell upon my own name, under a paragraph headed DROWNED. On reading it, I found that it was supposed that I had come to my death by throwing myself into the river. The paragraph also stated, that an only and a twin sister had been so affected by the sad calamity, that she had died a few days afterwards.

“At first I was almost paralyzed with grief—but I roused myself from it—and now, having no one in the world, as I thought, to care for me, I determined to set out in quest of adventure. I believe I was crazed. The blessed precepts taught us in our early home were obliterated entirely from my mind, and only ideas that I had imbibed from those pernicious books at Mrs. Monson’s took possession of me. Following those same ideas, I had on going to New Orleans assumed the name of Augusta May, and now, under this same name, and a veil, lest my youth might be a bar to my success, I applied for a situation as stewardess on board an English vessel, which was to sail at the beginning of the following week for Liverpool, and obtained the situation. In another week I was out on the broad sea.

“I was totally unfit for such a situation, as you may suppose, and the captain, as well as the few passengers, soon perceived it. But the captain was a kind-hearted man, and when I told him as much of my story as I thought prudent, and still under the name of Augusta May, an English girl, he excused my inefficiency, and promised to procure me employment on our arrival in England; though he strongly urged me to return to America, where, he said, females were so much better paid for their

labor. Among the passengers was a Mr. Fortescue—'

" 'Rosaline,' I said, 'what was his Christian name?'

" 'Clarence,' she replied.

" 'Oh! Heavenly Father,' I murmured, 'have mercy upon me!'

" 'What is the matter, Léoline?' said my sister.

" 'Nothing—nothing, my darling sister,' I replied; 'go on with your story.'

" 'Mr. Fortescue was an Englishman. He had been over to America on business connected with a large cotton firm. He was gentlemanly, agreeable, and kind. He had heard my story of former and better days, from the captain, and one night—it was a beautiful, clear, moonlight night, as I sat lonely upon the deck of the vessel, thinking of you and George, both dead and gone from me forever, as I believed—he came and talked with me. I think he was very much surprised at my language and manner, not expecting to hear or see such in a stewardess.

" 'He questioned me closely. I told him the same story I had told the captain: that I was an English girl, that my relations had all died in Louisiana, that I had no money, and that I had started out into the world to seek my own fortunes.

“Two weeks after we left New Orleans, I had begun to be quite a pet among the passengers—instead of their servant—for they all had heard my story, and my bearing, they could see, was not that of a common or uneducated person.

“They discovered that I could sing, and at night they would gather around me on the deck, and call for song after song from me, which it pleased me to give to them.

“One day, Mr. Fortescue addressed me in French, playfully. I replied instantly, to his surprise, and, he said, with a true and finished accent. Thanks to good Mrs. Esterby. Oh! Léoline, would we had never been separated from that dear, good woman.’

“The mention of Mrs. Esterby’s name recalled the fact that that good lady was awaiting me in the drawing-room. I did not tell Rosaline that she was there, for she was laboring under excitement enough, and from other causes, it appeared to me, than my presence. So going quietly to the hall, I told the servant there to say to Mrs. Esterby, for me, that it would be better for her and Mr. Fortescue to return to the hotel; that I should remain all night with Mrs. Brunswick, and would see them in the morning.

“Returning to Rosaline, who had buried her



head in the pillows of the couch, on which I had been sitting, she resumed :

“‘It was six weeks before the vessel we were on reached Liverpool, during which time Fortescue had become my devoted lover, and I had promised to be his wife as soon as we reached England. I believe he loved me fondly and devotedly, but I never loved him—I appreciated and admired his character. I was alone, though, and desolate, and to marry him was my only resource. A week after we landed in Liverpool I became his wife—’

“‘Thank God,’ I exclaimed, ‘you were his wedded wife!’

“‘Yes,’ said Rosaline, ‘his legal wife. The ceremony was performed by an Episcopal clergyman, and then by a Catholic priest—for Fortescue was of one Church and I of the other. The good sea-captain gave me away, and immediately after the ceremony we went to London. Fortescue had no relatives, so we only remained there long enough to see it, and took our departure for Paris.

“‘You ask me if I was not now happy. I was not. I might have been, had I pursued a different course. I had never undeceived my husband by telling him who I really was, and deceit of any kind is fatal to conjugal happiness; besides, I did

not love him. Love, such love as I have since felt, cannot make itself; it must emanate from, it must be spontaneous to, him who is the fulfilment of our being. Fortescue was not the fulfilment of mine. I never loved him. And yet, he is the father of my only child, my little Gertrude—named for our mother—the little child who sleeps far away from here, in the graveyard of *Père la Chaise*, whose spirit, thank God, is for ever and ever safe with the angels in heaven. Sin cannot reach her, misery cannot reach her, as both have reached me.

“‘At Paris I began to live; I never knew what life was until then. It was Paradise to me—ay, a Paradise full of many serpents, instead of one. It was there, though, that I did find the completion of my being, in one I loved with wild idolatry, in one who was true to me until his dying day, in one to whom I have been true, for time and eternity, and for whom I left Fortescue.’

“She paused here; and such heart-breaking sobs burst from her bosom, such wild, such soul-stirring moans, that all that I could feel for her was pity and love. I attempted to fold her in my arms, but this she would not permit, but whenever I approached to do so, she would say, ‘Touch me not—touch me not, Léoline—I am not worthy!’

"When she recovered her composure, she resumed :—

"Fortescue behaved nobly to me. In an interview with him I owned I had never loved him, but that my whole heart was absorbed in Sartanelle—for that was the name of him I loved. A bill of separation was quietly drawn up, and he endowed me with an ample sum of money. A duel passed between him and Sartanelle, in which neither was hurt. Fortescue I have never seen since, until to-night. I saw him at the opera. The sight of him brought back the past too painfully and vividly for me to continue to act the character of Mrs. Brunswick with sufficient self-possession, and I returned home.

"Sartanelle died a year ago, leaving me his entire fortune; and I left our Italian home, in which we had been so happy, and, spreading the report of my own death, and assuming the character of Mrs. Brunswick, I have come, at last, to this country.

"I have sought elsewhere for oblivion of the past. I have travelled in France, in Spain, in Germany, and in England; but everywhere the "wavy shadows of the past" rise before me—the what might have been, had I walked in the straight path of duty, so faithfully pointed out to us by

good Mrs. Esterby, comes before me in my gayest moments, and I feel that there is no peace for me on earth, nor pardon in heaven. Had I thought you were living, Léoline, I should not have come here.

“‘Lovers have crowded around me in all countries, and I have had the name of receiving them; but it was not so; the excitement of their devotion has been pleasant to me, but I have wooed them to my feet only to reject them. Gambling, in Germany, became my passion.

“‘Léoline,’ she added, dejectedly, ‘do you recognize your sister in the vile woman before you? Do you recognize her, or do you spurn her?’

“Another wild outbreak of tears and moans succeeded, and it was a long time before I could calm her.

“I had previously locked the doors of the room, and now I proceeded to undress my sister, and urge her to lie down and sleep. She would not let me lie beside her, but pointed to an adjoining room. But I would not leave her; I knelt by the bedside and drew my hand softly over hers, until her eyes closed, and then I lay down upon the couch upon which we had been sitting, which was near the bed. But oh! it was not to sleep. My eyes would not close; a burning sensation pervaded

them, and the veins in my head were filled to such tension, that they seemed ready to burst. My mind went back to the last time that I had slept in the room with my sister—to her innocence and purity then; I thought of all the complicated woe of the present; of my poor Fortescue—alas! what must his suffering be!—I longed to be his comforter and consoler, but, now, how could I be? Fate ordained that I must separate from him. My heart was ready to break with its accumulation of woe.

“I turned once to look at Rosaline—she lay, as on the eventful eve of her departure from Mrs. Monson’s, with her eyes wide open, and staring wildly into vacancy, but the look of determination was not there—only one of utter hopelessness.

“The next morning I could scarcely recognize Rosaline as the same person who had confessed herself to me so freely the night before. She was calm and pale, and seemed to feel an awkward restraint in my presence.

“Though I felt this, I spoke of her revelations of the night before, for I had a duty to perform, and I wished it over. First, I told her of my own life since we had been parted. She heard calmly what I said until I spoke of George—of his return six weeks after she went away—and of his death;

then she trembled with agitation. After this I urged upon her the necessity of confession, according to the ordinances of our church, and a return to a more Christian mode of life. I told her of my home, and my wealth, which she should share. I did not tell her of my engagement to Fortescue. I did not wish to add new bitterness to her life. I argued and besought her to listen to me, but I could make no impression upon her. She rejected all my overtures. Nor did she once say, 'Léoline, stay with me—let my home be yours.' The only concern she had was, that the world, through me, would discover that she was not what she pretended to be—Mrs. Brunswick, a rich English widow.

"Finding that I could not convince her, by argument or affection, of the sinfulness and worthlessness of her mode of life, and promising not to compromise her with the world, by letting persons know she was my lost sister, I returned to the hotel.

"My interview with Mr. Fortescue you can imagine. I told him I knew all, and still blessed and revered him. I never think of him, even now, without a deeply sad heart. He returned to Europe and died there, a few years after. He was a noble man, and I shall always love and revere his memory. Both he and Mrs. Esterby regarded my

promise to Rosaline not to let the world know who she was.

"Mrs. Esterby and myself remained in New York until the middle of the winter, and during that time there was not a day that I did not see Rosaline, and urge upon her a different course of life—but it was all in vain.

"‘I cannot be even comparatively happy,’ she would say, ‘in any other life. I live only in the excitement of the moment.’

"One day I said to her, ‘Rosaline, you took your golden crucifix from Mrs. Monson’s—if you still have it, look at it sometimes; it will lead you to better thoughts.’ We were in her room at the time. She led me to her toilette table, and, opening a little box in one corner of the drawer, she showed me the cross. ‘I dare not,’ she said, very softly, ‘put it near my guilty heart.’ In the other corner was a package marked *opium*. Alas—alas! it told a fearful tale.

"During this period she was leading a life of constant dissipation. Balls, parties, private theatricals, and concerts, succeeded each other at her house, with a rapidity and splendor that startled even New York. I never attended any of her entertainments but once, and then I saw what I never wish to see again. I saw her under the influence of what is

even worse than that exciting drug opium—I saw her under the influence of ardent spirits, not intoxicated, but unnaturally brilliant in looks, in conversation, and in song.

“Failing to make any impression upon my sister, I at last returned to New Orleans. After arriving there, Mrs. Esterby and myself heard often from New York, and our letters frequently spoke of the enchanting Mrs. Brunswick, who still remained the queen of beauty and fashion.

“I corresponded, of course, with Rosaline, but the correspondence was constrained and unnatural, and, therefore, most unsatisfactory.

“For four winters Rosaline lived thus brilliantly in New York—passing her summers at the different fashionable watering-places. Twice during her residence in New York Mrs. Esterby and myself visited her, but I failed in my efforts to make her think of changing her mode of life. During my last visit her health was evidently failing.

“About this time my good, faithful friend—Mrs. Esterby—died. It was then that I came to reside with your mother.

“My letters to Rosaline shortly after this remained unanswered; and on writing to a lady who knew her, I received the reply—that the beautiful Mrs. Brunswick had disappeared from New York as



suddenly as she had appeared, and that no one could imagine where she had gone.

"You may remember," said Léoline, in telling me the story, "how sad I was at your mother's house—now you can account for it.

"I had been residing with your family about two months, when one night I found it impossible to sleep. I often had sleepless nights, but this night I was seized with a presentiment that it was necessary for me to keep awake. Becoming more and more restless, I at last arose and paced the floor. The moon shone brilliantly and yet mournfully, for I was thinking of another moonlight night, and a pair of wide-open, wild-looking, large blue eyes. Suddenly I started. Surely, I thought, some one called my name. I heard the voice again—it was a familiar one. I rushed upon the piazza of the house, and, struggling between two policemen, I saw the figure of a woman, and her upturned face, with the moon shining full upon it, revealed to me the face of my sister.

"With bounds and a shriek—"

"Ay," I interrupted, "I shall never forget that shriek."

"I flew, rather than walked down the stairs, and, throwing open the street door, demanded of the policemen what they were doing to my sister.

“‘Your sister!’ they exclaimed. ‘She is a poor, miserable, drunken creature.’

“Alas—alas! they were right, though she was my sister.

“Your father, who, like the other inmates of the house, had been awakened by my shriek, now came to my poor sister’s rescue, and soon she was safe in my arms—at last, at last—in my own room. Poor, poor sister!

“You wonder, of course, at Rosaline’s sudden appearance in New Orleans. It seems, that shortly after I had last seen her, her health declined very rapidly; in fact, her physician told her that she had not many months to live. When this fact forced itself upon her mind, nature began to plead in her heart, and she longed for me and my love.

“Quietly she made her arrangements to leave New York, so quietly that her intention of doing so was never suspected by her numerous acquaintances. She came directly to New Orleans, and took rooms in a very retired portion of the city. She had been in the city but a day, when I discovered her in that miserable condition in front of your house. During the day she had discovered my residence, intending, she said, to apprise me of her arrival the next day; but that night, under the influence of exciting causes, she had wandered forth, and—you know the rest.

"She was sick for a month," continued Léoline, "in your mother's house. You were too young to know or remember much about it, though, I presume, you have some slight recollection of her death."

"Yes," I answered, "and of your grief."

"Yes," said Léoline, "it was a strange grief; for I was comforted in it by the thought that my poor sister's troubles and reckless life were over, and that she died within the pale of our Mother Church.

"She was like her former self during the days of her illness. After consenting to see the kind priest who came daily and administered to the needs of her soul, she was a changed being. All her old love for me returned. She no longer repulsed me when I fondled her; and night after night she sank to sleep within my arms.

"The night of her death, which happened suddenly—so suddenly that the priest did not arrive until a few moments before her last breath, to perform the sacrament of Extreme Unction over her—she said to me, as I sat by her—

"'Léoline, I have been very—very wicked, but God has forgiven me for Jesus's sake; and when I am in heaven He will let me hold my little baby in my arms. I was afraid He would not—my baby was so sinless and I so sinful—but the good priest says I

am not to fear, that God is ever good. And some day, Leoline, you will come to heaven. Mother and father and George are there, and good Mrs. Esterby, too, and we will all be so happy—as happy as in our own old home.

“‘Look—look!’ she said, as if some vision had caught her eye, ‘look how brightly flows the water in the river!’ Again her mind was on the dear old home on the river banks—that home which, in all her wanderings, had remained the purest oasis of her life. ‘Look how bright it is! and see—see the shining boat that is gliding towards us on its waves. Look, Léoline, mother is on it, and father and George; and George is holding out my little baby to me, and calling me. I must go, Léoline; kiss me—kiss me, and come soon.’

“I bent to kiss her, and kissed the face of the dying.

“I remember but little after this. Grief benumbed my senses. I have a faint remembrance of the priest, the tapers, and, after a while, a clearer memory of these words of the good old priest, as he left the house—

“‘When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And

Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee—go, and sin no more.’ And the words of the good priest comforted me.”

It has been two months since I have added any thing to these pages. Of the first of these two months there is nothing to record, for the days were “cold and dark and dreary”—it rained, and the “winds” were “never weary”—so that the household went nowhere, except to the hospitals, where there was but little to do, for the men were rapidly improving. Brave hearts! They are delighted at their improvement, and are looking forward to joining in the Spring campaign with true patriotic ardor.

During the rainy month, Venetia received some new books, and she has been reading aloud to us. Among them were *Joseph the Second* and Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. The first is a captivating work, translated from the German by an accomplished lady of Mobile. Queen says that her only objection to it is, the frequent and vivid description of small-pox—in fact, she says that it required a great deal of courage on her part, not to be vaccinated while reading it. But, really, it is a delightful book, and sustains one’s interest to the very close; and even then, we say we hope there will be more volumes.

There is a peculiarity in this book that I have not

met with before in a continuous story, and that is, that you may read almost any chapter in it separately, and find a complete little drama by itself. The chapter relating to Joseph and his pastoral love Marianne is a charming little idyl.

Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* has, no doubt, lost much of its terseness and perspicuity in the translation. It is the *fashion* to praise it very highly, and to think and say it is the most wonderful book of the day; but I'm not in the fashion. It is an interesting and original novel; but, apart from this, one might say of it—what Louis the Fourteenth is reported to have said of Fénelon's *Telemachus*—"It is a Pandemonium of empty speculation." Frederick the Great once said, "If I had a kingdom to punish, I would give it to the philosophers." He might have added, could he have read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, "or, to Monsieur Hugo, to exemplify his theories in." No doubt but some of Victor Hugo's views are correct; but they are not, nor can they ever be made, practicable, until this earth pass away, and a new is created.

The second month, during which I have written nothing in these pages, we ran away from, and returned to, our refugee home. Sherman was making his advance through the State, like a giant tarantula, with his arms and legs spread out in so many

directions, that it was impossible to tell at what moment one of these arms or legs might reach us. Numerous villages to the north of us had already been visited by the renowned raider, and dwellings burned, provisions taken away, and the inhabitants subjected to other horrors, such as are attendant upon the invasion of all large armies. Consequently, we began to think of what it was best for us to do.

Our household held a council of war, and it was decided that, as we had lost almost all our worldly possessions by leaving our original homes, we had better retain the few valuables we had by running with them. We concluded, therefore, to have every thing in readiness, and, when the enemy approached nearer, to fly. As there was nothing about the house itself to attract the cupidity of the stragglers of an army, we hoped that it would be unmolested, and that we could return to it. We had become accustomed to our residence, and the kindly neighbors about us, and did not wish to make a change in either.

We had but a small quantity of provisions, and this we determined to take with us—for we heard very sad accounts of the destitution in the interior.

We made sister Maddie commander-in-chief, trust-

ing every thing to her clear good sense and discretion; and forthwith she began to make preparations for our departure at a moment's warning.

Three large cradle-shaped wagons, without springs, were procured. One was for the provisions, another for our trunks, the third for ourselves—the latter was filled with fodder for us to sit upon. The servants were to ride with the valuables on top of the baggage. Even the *critters*, as negroes always call mules, were ready to harness to the wagons on the first intimation of the enemy's approach.

Every day Sherman's columns came nearer and nearer, and at last it was evident that we had no time to lose, if we wished to avoid the undesired contact with it.

It was our intention to start early in the morning, but, on the night previous to our intended departure, a neighbor came in and told us that the general belief was, that the enemy would reach the village before morning.

No time was to be lost. In an hour, all of us, with pale faces and beating hearts, were ready to be lifted into the wagons.

The night was raw, and it was sleeting; we had no coverings to the wagons, and such a thing as an umbrella could not be procured throughout the Southern States. Fortunately, we had oil-cloth to



cover the bedding and provisions; it was necessary to preserve these comforts at all hazards.

The children—sweet innocents!—behaved admirably. Pet waked them from their sleep, and explained to them the peculiarity of our situation, and the necessity that there was for activity and quiet. They seemed to comprehend it, and they adapted themselves to it with the readiness of older persons.

We feared that the exposure to the night air would affect Sister Maddie's baby, who had been suffering so severely with the whooping-cough; but Pet took him under her especial care, and we all felt that she would prevent any bad results to him, if it were possible.

The negroes were more frightened than we, with the exception of Uncle Sambo—an old man belonging to Pet, and who follows her about wherever she goes. He had, as he said, *raised* Miss Pet, and her mother too, and had been about the world too much "to be skeered by Yankees."

Uncle Sambo was our sole male dependence. He was to drive the baggage-wagon, containing not only all our wearing apparel and bedding, but a quantity of silver plate belonging to the party; and about his person were Pet's diamonds and money—diamonds which he said he had seen "shining on Miss Pet's mother" too often to let any "derved Yankees

get hold of." The rest of us kept our money and diamonds about our persons. A stout negro woman drove the provision-wagon, and another one our wagon.

All being finally arranged, we started off. On arriving in the interior of the village, through which we had to pass to the road that Uncle Sambo said would take us in the right direction, we saw wagons similar to our own in front of Aunt Annie's house, and at the house on the hill where our blonde beauty lived. Large pine fires, burning in front of each dwelling, enabled us to do so. We only stopped long enough at each house to tell our friends which direction we were to take, and we proceeded on our way—they promising to follow.

The patients from the hospitals had been gone, Aunt Annie told us, for two hours.

Lights were seen flitting from room to room in the different houses, as we passed through the village—an unusual thing at this late hour. The whole town was evidently awake, and the inmates of the houses disposing of their valuables in places of supposed safety. Cotton was burning in several places. Every thing betokened the belief of Sherman's proximity.

Slowly our cumbersome wagons lumbered past these scenes, out into the dense woods beyond, and

through the muddy roads, in which we thought we would founder every moment. The night continued raw, and the sleet changed to rain, and, in less than half an hour, we were completely drenched through.

I have often thought since, with what uncomplaining fortitude we bore the discomfort of that night. We were all nestled together, in a perfect heap, on the fodder at the bottom of the wagon; for in this way only could we keep warm.

The children were as still as mice. Once, Sister Maddie's baby cried out, and had a fit of coughing; but Pet soon hushed him to sleep, and soothed his cough with some preparation that she carried in her pocket for that purpose.

I suppose it was about four o'clock in the morning when we heard the report of rifles. Oh! how our hearts beat. Sister Maddie stopped the wagons, and, calling to Uncle Sambo, we held a consultation with him.

Sambo said we were just coming to the cross-road that led to the village, and through which it was supposed the enemy would reach it. He thought that we would have passed it before, but the roads were so dreadful that the *critters* could not get on fast. Now he was afraid, and so were we, that the rifles we heard were from the enemy.

"What shall we do—what shall we do?" we exclaimed, in terrified voices.

"Drive right off de road up into de thicket, dar," said Sambo, "and let me go spy de debils out."

At first we were afraid to let him leave us, but at last we consented to do so. He was gone, I suppose, for half an hour, and during all that time our hearts were beating with frightful tremor, as we did not know at what moment the enemy might pass down the road, and most probably discover us; but our detention and fright were needless. Uncle Sambo returned, and said that the firing was from our own sharp-shooters, who were hid in the thicket, near the cross-roads; that he had seen the captain and talked with him, and that the captain told him to hurry on with the ladies, for the enemy might be in sight at any moment.

With renewed courage we started, and at the end of the longest hour I ever passed we were safely on the other side of the cross-road, and, unless stragglers came that way, we were safe.

Daylight now began to dawn, but we were still cold, wet, and miserable; and we appeared likely to remain so, for we were not more than fourteen miles from home, and if we wished to stop, which we were afraid to do, there was not even a log-cabin within five miles, Uncle Sambo said, and he knew

the country well, having foraged through it, in all directions, for our family supplies.

Before starting, Uncle Sambo had brought to Pet an old oil-cloth coat, which he procured somewhere, and insisted upon her putting it on. Daylight discovered Pet without this coat. She had taken it off in the night and wrapped it about Sister Maddie's baby. They both lay in the bottom of the wagon fast asleep—the baby in Pet's arms; and, even in all our discomfort, we remarked to each other how alike, in purity, was the expression of the two countenances. "It's my opinion," said Queen, "that an angel has kept so close to Pet all her life that it has photographed its likeness on her face."

Sister Maddie, who had been taking charge of every thing in general, and of her other children, scolded Pet, when she awoke, for doing so imprudent a thing—though she could not help loving her the more for her unselfishness. But Pet contracted a cough that night from which she has never recovered.

The children soon began to wake, and ask for something to eat. Sister Maddie had had a large tin box filled with bottles of milk, and cold ham, and biscuits. It was opened, and we all felt refreshed after partaking of its contents.

Shortly after daylight the rain ceased, and the

weather became intensely cold, but there was no place to stop; and, even if there had been, we did not think it would yet be safe to do so. In our rear we discovered other wagons, and were truly thankful when we found they contained the other refugees, and that they had passed the cross-road in safety. We did not stop for them, but continued on our way.

It had now become so cold that we suffered severely. Our limbs, owing to our necessarily cramped position, and consequent imperfect circulation, were nearly frozen; our faces, too, were so benumbed, that when we attempted to speak to each other we found it difficult to articulate.

At twelve o'clock in the day our condition was such, that, after consulting us, Sister Maddie told Uncle Sambo that we must stop somewhere, or she feared some of us would die.

He said there was a deserted log-cabin about a mile distant, containing one room and a fireplace.

We bade him drive to it as quickly as possible.

Negroes know nothing of distances—Uncle Sambo's mile proved to be at least two miles—it was an hour before we reached the cabin, which appeared to us, in our discomfort, as welcome as a palace.

Uncle Sambo had to lift us from the wagon, for we had almost lost the use of our limbs. Pet

was the last, and when he saw her without the oil-cloth coat, and then discovered it on the child, he was furious.

“Well, now, Miss Pet,” he began, “ain’t that a pooty ting for you to go been do? Bless my ole soul if dis nigger eber see any body wid so little sense as you is got! What for you no call ole Sambo, and take he coat? What am Mass John—Pet’s husband—gwine to say, when he comes and finds you sick? Mass John tell Sambo, de last ting he say, to take good care Miss Pet, but bless dis nigger’s soul, who tink you gwine do such foolishness! Chile,” he continued, “go right in dat house and dry you’self! Ole Sambo make fire, ’fore he feeds de critters, and bless my soul! dem critters needs feeding.”

We found a perfectly bare room in the cabin, not even a bench or a stool to sit upon, but there was a large fireplace, and that was indeed a comfort.

The children, who had gone outside with the negroes to pick up pine chips, while Sambo cut the wood—for, thanks to Sister Maddie’s foresight, we had brought an axe—now came in with their aprons filled, followed by Sambo, carrying several enormous pine knots, and we soon had a roaring fire. What a comfort! what a luxury! after the discomfort of the last twelve hours!

We sat in a circle on the floor around the fire, having taken off our outer wrappings and hung them on the rafters to dry, and in front of us was placed the tin box holding the provisions. It was empty when we had given the negroes their share.

"Well," said Sister Maddie, "what are we to do for more cooked food? I thought we would certainly arrive at some habitable place, and that the quantity I had provided would last until then." Her inquiry was not answered, for Sambo came in to ask how long we were going to stop at this place.

We all exclaimed against starting off directly, saying we did not think there was any necessity for such haste.

"Yes dar is," said Sambo. "Dem Yankees can spread des selves out dis far in no time, and if des find out we hab all dis silber and de dimans, des come right straight arter us. I ain't 'feared of dem, but Sambo just beliebs des is de debil, he do. Sambo tink so eber since des dammed up Red Riber, right by old Mass' plantation. Ky, ky, I say when I hear des do dat, des is de debil, sure. Dam up Red Riber? ky, ky!"

We were very much amused by Sambo's remarks, but there was a question to be settled, and at



once, so we dismissed him to the other side of the cabin with some food, and, consulting together, we decided to go on immediately.

"But," said Sister Maddie, as we decided, "we must contrive to bake some biscuit before starting, for we may be out all night, and the children will be in need of them."

We had no utensils, but Sambo took out some flour and lard and ham from the provision wagon, and Aunt Hettie found a large flat stone outside the door, and, after taking it to a brook near by and cleansing it, she made and baked the biscuit on it. The ham Sambo held before the fire on forks, and frizzled it.

It was after four o'clock before we were ready to start. We looked forward to a very disagreeable night. It had ceased to rain in the morning, but the air was becoming colder and colder every moment. We had dried our garments as well as we could, but they still had a feeling of dampness.

We travelled all night. It was so dark, and we so sleepy, that we did not perceive whether we passed many houses or log-cabins on the roads or not, though I presume we did, for by early daylight we had travelled fourteen miles, and found ourselves at the entrance of a pretty little village.

We were now nearly forty miles removed from the enemy, and we determined to rest. So, driving to the hotel—as it was called—we alighted.

I must not fail to mention here, that the other refugee families had overtaken us, and that therefore a very goodly company of us presented ourselves at the door of the inn.

The landlady, on coming into the parlor at our summons, told us that there was not a vacant room in the house, with the exception of the parlor, and that even if she could accommodate us with room, she could not supply us with food; that it was almost impossible to get meat and bread for her own family, and that the refugee families who occupied the rooms in her house supplied themselves.

Telling her that we had our own food, she at last consented to give us the parlor for a few days. This parlor could boast of nothing but a broken-down hair-cloth sofa, four or five common chairs, and some flashy bedaubed shade-curtains, which I ought to praise, in spite of their extraordinary perspective and their unintelligible designs, for they were a source of constant amusement to the children. One of the curtains, representing a knight in red assisting a lady in yellow into a top-heavy kind of barge, arrested the children's attention particu-

larly, and Pet told them a story about it, which even interested all of us.

Into this one room all the different families were obliged to crowd. They were eight grown persons without the negroes, and six children. Imagine our discomfort. But we counted it as nothing. The room had a large fireplace—that was a luxury.

Uncle Sambo had the wagons driven into the yard of the inn, and, after assisting the women to bring in the mattresses, and such trunks as we needed for a change of clothing, he went to watch by the wagons all night.

After making ourselves and the children as comfortable and clean as circumstances would permit, we threw ourselves, with them, upon the mattresses, which were spread over the floor, and were soon sleeping as refreshingly and soundly as if in our soft, canopied beds, in our far-off home in Louisiana.

About the "hush of midnight" I awoke—a few bright sparks were lying in the fireplace—and, making my way on tiptoe through the mattresses on the floor, I placed a knot of wood upon them to keep up the fire until morning. As I passed one of the windows, I looked out. Nothing was to be seen but the yard of the inn, in which Sambo had built a large fire, before which the faithful old man walked

to and fro, keeping watch over the wagons. It was a striking and weird sight, and was a tale in itself.

Returning to my sleeping-place, I ran my eyes over the occupants of the floor. Again, as the fire cast its lurid light over the sleepers, an interesting picture was presented. Here could be seen a stray curl; there a mass of long black hair; farther on a rounded arm, covered with costly bracelets—for in this way we travelled with them, the close sleeves of our dresses covering them in the day; now the rosy foot of a child; occasionally words would escape the sleepers' lips—words in which the names of their loved ones, far away in the army, might be heard. The whole scene, and the thought of the old negro man outside—our only earthly protector—made me indescribably sad. Thoughts of my own lost home came surging over me, and fears of further misery to our loved Southern country—and in the silence of the night I wept bitter tears.

While weeping, I heard the sound of some one stirring in the room, and, looking around, I saw that there was another suffering at heart even as I was. Pet had risen, and was kneeling in front of the fire—her long, dark hair was falling around her, her eyes were cast upwards, and her lips were moving in prayer, while tears coursed each other rapidly down her face. I did not need to ask the cause of her

prayers and tears—I knew too well. I could only silently say, “God spare us all!”

We remained two days and three nights in this place, and the most of the time in that room, for it rained incessantly, and we could not venture out to see the town. My only recollection of it is this room, and the depth of red clayey mud which presented itself to our eyes when we looked out of the window.

Fortunately we all had our knitting, so we were not idle. Venetia read to us from an old copy of Wesley’s Sermons, which the landlady lent her, but they were not calculated to dispel our gloomy feelings, able as they were, so we begged her to close the volume. We had our books in the baggage-wagon, but we did not wish to unpack them.

On the third morning, when we awoke, we found, on inquiring into the state of the roads, that the one over which we had passed to reach this place was entirely unfit for travel, and that the bridges had been washed away by the recent rains.

The only thing left for us to do was, to make a *détour*, quite out of our way, to a road which would make the journey twenty-five miles longer, and through a portion of country over which the enemy had just passed. But we had our provisions, so we determined to proceed homeward.

The weather continued cold, and our discomfort, as we jogged along in our uncomfortable vehicles, was much as it had been before, with this exception, we were blessed in having no rain.

The first night, we could find no house to shelter us, and Uncle Sambo unharnessed the mules and we camped in the woods. We feared to light fires, lest stragglers might find us and rob us. It was a weary night, and we felt frightened during the whole of it. We slept but little; once, several of us declared, in low tones, that we heard the sound of voices and wheels. We were thankful when day began to dawn—but, alas! daylight brought to us the knowledge of a sad calamity—our provision wagon was gone! Aunt Hetty had been driving it, and had camped at some distance from us. We did not know whether this was intentional or not—we only knew that wagon, mules, provision, and Aunt Hetty herself had gone; and we have never seen either Aunt Hetty, or any thing that was left in her charge, since.

This calamity may not seem of much importance to my readers; but they must remember that it had been impossible for us to get the little food we needed, for two days, in a place where the enemy had never been. What, then, were we to do for food, in the country through which we

had to pass to get home—the country which the enemy had passed over?

We were frightened, not so much for ourselves as for the children. It would take us, at least, two days longer to reach home; we could do without food, but the children could not. We had had a large supply of biscuits made, but our appetites had been ravenous the day before, and, when we came to count them, there were but six left. We had depended on stopping at some house, and having fresh ones made from our own flour.

Sister Maddie inquired of us if we had any wine or tea, or any thing that could sustain life, in our trunks. Venetia had a bottle of wine, and Pet had about an ounce of tea, and the part of a paper of *corn-starch*, which was an article used by all of us, in lieu of toilette powder. These things were taken from the trunks, and we proceeded on our way—thankful that we had something with which to sustain life.

The other families had not brought their supplies; they could not obtain the wagons to do so, and they had dug large holes in the fields back of their houses and deposited the provision in them. When they arrived at home, they found the provision undisturbed—which was well for us, for they shared with us.

At every house or shanty, as we went along, we inquired for food, but the same reply was always given by the inmates—they did not know where they were to get food for themselves.

In the middle of the day, we each took some wine and water, and gave the children the biscuits; but this did not satisfy their appetites, and, an hour later, their cries for food were pitiful.

We had hoped to obtain milk for them, but we had now approached the country through which the enemy had passed, and there was no stock to be seen, of any kind. We did not dare to use the corn-starch to-day; if we did, we would have nothing for to-morrow. There was only about a good sized cupful.

About nightfall we arrived at a little hamlet. Of course we made every effort to obtain food, but again we were unsuccessful. We would have rested here, could we have done so, but we agreed that the sooner we reached home the better. We concluded, however, to boil the ounce of tea, and put it in the milk-bottles, and take what we did not drink, with us for the children.

Accordingly we alighted, to walk about a little, until Sambo made the tea. We did not expect to be detained over a few moments, but Sambo looked in a dozen houses, at least, before he could



find any thing in which to boil the tea. The poor inhabitants had been deprived of every thing, even to their cooking utensils. At last, he discovered a woman who had an *eight-gallon iron pot*, and in this he made our ounce of tea, over a pine fire in the road—the owner of the pot standing by all the time, lest we should run away with her treasure. She had the candor to tell us that she would not trust us any more than she would the Federals. Queen, who must always have something comical to say, told her that she thought she might retire on a comfortable fortune, at the end of a few months, if she hired out her pot by the hour to the neighborhood.

The children, as night approached and we continued our journey, became wildly clamorous for food. We gave them the tea, but it only appeared to aggravate their appetites. The night was the most uncomfortable of any we had passed. The children were wakeful and fretful from hunger, and it distressed us to hear and see them. Pet tried all her varied powers of amusement for them, but unsuccessfully. Queen said she believed Pet sang the whole of Mother Goose's melodies, from beginning to end.

Sambo stopped at the first house we came to after daylight, and, superintended by Sister Mad-

die, concocted something for the children, out of the corn-starch and some water; and, though it was any thing but inviting in its appearance, they ate it greedily.

All things must have an end. So, at last, had our wearisome journey. We reached home that night, alive, but in a woful condition. Pet fainted on being taken from the wagon, and the rest of us could hardly walk. We all sought repose at an early hour, for we were too much fatigued to ask or answer questions concerning the occurrences of the past few days.

The next morning, though we still were suffering from the effects of our journey, we were thankful we had taken it. We found our house as we had left it, though, from its having the reputation of being the residence of a party of rich Louisianians, it had been among the first places visited by the enemy. Had we been there, we would have lost every thing. The town itself had suffered but little. Government property had been burnt, the stores and one house sacked. The people generally had been unmolested.

Pet has been quite sick since our return.

Among the patients at the hospital last fall, was a lieutenant of artillery, who attracted the atten-

tion of the ladies particularly, by his determination and energy, and his patient endurance of suffering. He had been wounded seven times. At Christmas he was out on crutches. We met him first socially at Aunt Annie's, and we were so much amused by his varied accomplishments, that we fancied we were at a veritable show. He possessed wonderful powers of imitation. His face displayed his characteristics; it reminded one of the masks of Comus. Without being an elegant man, without being one who would ever arrive at any great distinction, he was yet a marvellous one, his talents were so varied. At one moment he was an Irish school-teacher, with the purest brogue, while, in the next, he was all the pupils saying their lessons. Before you would expect the school could be dismissed, he was an organ-grinder, or rather the organ itself, and the imitation was so perfect, that we looked around for the accompanying monkey. His caricatures equalled Cruikshanks's. He copied music beautifully, composed very well, and was no mean painter. Some of his designs on white silk, representing different scenes on the field of battle, were extremely well done; they were intended for the sides of fancy tobacco-bags. He sang well also—and withal he had such a fund of wit and humor, that his company was always sought again by those

who had enjoyed it once. He was the delight of the children, and whenever there was a gathering of the little ones, you would surely find our Lieutenant in the midst of them, opening his budget of fun.

He never fretted at his disabled condition, except that it debarred him from going to the field; and, though he was exempted from active duty, when the winter waned and he found he could manage his horse, not all our protestations could prevent his joining his command.

A week ago he was brought back here, at his own request, in a dying condition, having had both legs so shattered in a recent engagement, that they were amputated on the field.

A sadness pervaded the whole community, when his misfortune and dying condition were known. We all would have devoted our time to him, could we have been useful to him; but the physician needed but one of us as a nurse, so, naturally, we resigned the place to Aunt Annie, feeling that she was the most competent to fill it.

His death occurred a few days after his arrival here. Aunt Annie was with him to the last, and says that the heroic manner in which he endured his agonizing sufferings was wonderful. His mind was bright until death. He sent messages to all

of us—and our children, with whom he had played so often, were his last earthly thought, the names of the different little ones being constantly on his lips until he passed away to the Silent Land. There is a beauty and pathos in this touching incident, that an abler pen than mine might make much of—the warrior of a dozen battle-fields, in his last moments, sporting in imagination with innocent childhood!

The children joined us in following his remains to the grave, and when spring-time comes they will often bedeck it with flowers.

It is a month since I have recorded any thing about our household; but, alas! that household is not what it was! And, kind reader, unless you wish to read of tears, and deep heart sorrow, it were better for you to pass the few remaining pages by.

Our household, I repeat, is not what it was—

“The courses of our lives, that, side by side,  
Ran for some little while, are sundered now;  
We meet not now, as once, day after day,  
In pleasant intercourse to 'change our thoughts.”

But each, with a new grief, weeps alone. No more is heard the gladsome laugh of Queen, the

songs of Sister Maddie and Pet, or Venetia's pleasant talk.

The pall of affliction hangs over our house, and beneath it, though we live and breathe, there is no pleasure in our life, nor exertion in our breath.

Queen's son is wounded and a prisoner; Sister Maddie's, a prisoner only; but Pet, our darling, saintly Pet, mourns a husband and an only brother, both killed in Virginia.

We knew of the affliction that had come upon our favorite, several days before any of us had the heart to tell her of it; but her letters ceased to arrive, the worst fears beset her mind, and the fatal news could no longer be kept from her.

At first, we feared she would die, so great was the shock to her, but now she is better, though we fear only temporarily. There is an appearance about her eyes I do not like; her cough is more hollow, and her frame becomes more attenuated every day. Besides this, there is that unmistakable rose upon her cheek, whose "root is death." She makes no complaint, and by that we know how she suffers—for silent grief is deep.

Since her trouble I have occupied the same room with her. She appears not to sleep at all; when her cough is not keeping her awake, she is restlessly walking to and fro, with a despairing expres-

sion upon her face, most painful to witness. At times she crouches in a helpless kind of way upon the floor, with her hands clasped so tightly in prayer, that they bear the impression of each other some time after. We do what we can for the poor sufferer, but no one, but God, can help her.

Pet has ever had that faith which "covers all things with hues of heaven," and now, God grant it may give balm to her wounded soul!

The other day, as I sat by her bedside, with her hand in mine, she alluded to her affliction, for the first time, and in this way—it was so like Pet, that I must record it.

"When I was a child," she said, "I often walked with my father to the top of a high mountain, on whose summit was a lake, the depth of which had never been sounded. This lake and its depth were a constant subject of thought and wonder to me; and, while my father would sit near it reading, I would recline upon its banks, and, peering into the water, would wonder what place I would come out at on the other side of the world, if I fell into the lake. For, as it could not be sounded, I had concluded that its waters went clear through the earth. When I returned home, I would invariably study the different maps and a globe, and look for the

place on them which I thought ought to be opposite this mysterious lake. Finally, I found a cluster of islands, that I concluded were just opposite, and my childish fancy named them, *The Isles of the Blessed*, and, I thought, should I fall in the lake, it would not matter, for I would come out at these *Happy Isles*.

“Since my affliction, my mind has often reverted to that lake. At times, I seem to be in its deep darkness, ever moving down, down, down—the black waters press upon me, they crush me, they would suffocate me, they would drown me, were it not for the living hope in my heart—and that hope is, that on the other side of the great waters I will find the *Isles of the Blessed*.”

It is some days since I wrote the above, and in those days Pet has drooped so rapidly, that she is confined constantly to her bed—alas! I fear, never to arise from it again. The Doctor shakes his head when we question him, and says that, what with her grief and cough, he does not see much to hope for.

Last night she fell asleep, just after a severe spell of coughing, and slept, for the first time, refreshingly, and until morning. She awoke with a beautiful smile upon her face, and these words—“Oh,



I have had such a beautiful dream ! How good God is !”

“Tell it to me, Pet, darling,” I said.

“I will,” she answered, “for I think it was more than a dream; I think that it was something true that God let me see, so that I may not be afraid to die. I am going to die,” she continued, “and I am glad it is so. I would not pray for it, but I am thankful it is God’s will that I should go hence.

“I dreamed that I was carried to a star, and that every thing in the star was very different from this earth—every thing was more beautiful—though, this earth is very lovely, and I think that, when we try to be very good, God reveals new beauties to us in it constantly.

“The inhabitants of the star were like, and yet unlike, the beings of earth; their expression of feature was purer and holier, and a radiance seemed to gleam from their eyes and hair. They were not trammelled with clothing as we of the earth, but over their bodies grew a silvery gossamer tissue, which had the appearance of spun glass, though, on touching it, it had not the stiffness of what it resembled. It was soft and delicate.

“The ground, or rather the substance on which these seraphic creatures moved and reposed, was like layers of fresh pink rose-leaves, and the foot

in pressing upon it made no indentation, though it was as soft as velvet. The trees were covered with foliage of the same color, but of a richer, deeper tint, and in their branches flitted birds, on 'flower-like wings,' whose radiance and song were like nothing on this earth. Silvery streams, like 'veins of light,' ran through emerald meadows, bearing on their waters trembling lilies. And the emerald meadows were tufted over with pure white flowers, which had the gleamings of gems in their bosoms, and the flowers had a vital fragrance.

"Then, over high, graceful banks, bright cascades threw their crystal waters, which rippled and flowed away, with glad murmuring sounds, into little inlets of their own, embosomed by trees with still the same roseate foliage.

"The rosy hue that pervaded all things did not produce an unpleasant glare, but every thing was veiled in a soothing light—such as you often see pouring through dense forests.

"'How came I in this wondrous star?' I said to the seraphs, who gathered around me.

"'You have passed away from earth,' they said, 'and an angel has brought you to live here, until you are fit for the kingdom of God.'

"When the name of God was mentioned, they bowed their heads, and fell upon their knees,

and a gentle wind, passing through the branches of the trees, brought from them a melody of sound; and the seraphs, in harmony with this sound, sang 'Alleluia, alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' And this melody troubled not my brain, as earthly music has often done, with 'dim remembrances,' and the seraphs said it had power to lull all pain.

"Then I fell into a deep sleep, beneath the trees that had brought forth such sweet sounds, and when I awaked, I was clothed in the same gossamer substance as the seraphs, and a great fear came into my heart, lest I might never be fit for the kingdom of God. And when I told my fear to the seraphs, sweet smiles played over their faces, and they answered, 'So felt we, when our pilgrimage began here; but the angels will teach you, as they have taught us, and all will be well.'

"Then I told them how much I had loved and trusted in Jesus, and yet not one-half as much as I ought to have done. But at the name of Jesus, the smiles fled from their faces, and streams of tears fell upon the rose-leaves at their feet.

"'Why do you weep so?' I asked.

"'We weep because of the agony that Jesus endured for our sakes; we weep for the many sins that we committed on earth—sins for which we

were never sorry enough there — but of which, now that the holy angels have been our teachers, we feel the enormity, and for which now we feel truly, truly repentant.’

“And as the seraphs continued to weep, I heard a rustling sound, and, floating above us, I saw a wondrous shining angel, whose wings ‘a solemn splendor darted.’ She bore a crystal cup in her hand, and descending, she gathered in it the tears of the seraphs, that lay like diamonds at their feet.

“Then the gentle wind was wafted through the trees again, and the sky itself ‘rang as a dome,’ with the new and glorious harmony that was borne from them upon the air; and clear and high the seraphs’ voices, in which mine involuntarily joined, rang forth these words of Scripture: ‘Blessing and honor, and glory and power, be unto Him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.’

“And the angel, floating away, smiled as she heard the song, and said: ‘Your tears, my children, I carry with me to pour into the holy vessels of the Church on earth, and the good priest of that Church will sprinkle them upon his flock, that repentance may help to beget repentance.’ And as the angel disappeared on her holy mission, the new

song rose higher and higher; and while it yet swelled, and the forms of my dead loved ones joined us, attuning their voices to ours, and a strong 'joy of immortality' was born within me—I awoke.

"Oh! it was a happy, beautiful dream! and I cannot help thinking that there is such a star, and that ere long I will be carried to it, never more to be separated from the loved ones who await me there. God is good; He has not forsaken me in my bitter hour of trial."

It is six weeks since I wrote the last lines—six weeks only, and now that name, Pet, which was a household word among us, is inscribed upon a wooden tablet, in the quiet graveyard of the village; and beneath the sod, near the clump of trees, with her little hands—those gentle hands—folded meekly on her breast, lies our darling. And now it seems

"—— that something new or strange

Had passed upon the flowers, the trees, the ground;  
Some slight, but unintelligible change  
On every thing around."

She passed quietly away to the Silent Land—

so quietly, that death seemed not death, but only a gentle sleep.

After her dream she was happier, and often would smile upon us as we ministered at her bedside. All that human skill could do to save her life was done; but God willed her to go hence, and, though we mourn her loss, yet we rejoice for her sake. The glory of her life had departed—she has gone to seek it again, and to bask in its beams in another world—perchance in the star shown her in her dream. And her name—oh! how solemn now seems its sound—has become one of the sanctities of our lives.

“But now a pearl is from our chaplet dropped,  
 But now a flower is from our garland river,  
 One singing fountain of our joy is stopped,  
 One brightest star extinguished in our heaven.

“One only—yet, oh! who may guess the change  
 That by that one has been among us wrought!  
 How all familiar things are waxen strange  
 Or sad—what silence to our house is brought!”

Her last words were, “Jesus to the last.” I shall never forget them. May your motto and mine be, kind reader, “Jesus to the last.” He

alone can help us in the dying hour. Unseen, He stands by the Christian's dying bed, encouraging, supporting, comforting him. Unseen, He weeps with the bereaved ones. Unseen, He bears away from the mortal clay the beatified spirit to its everlasting home. We, with our mortal eyes, cannot behold him—we see through a glass darkly;—but the scales fall from the eyes of the dying, when the sun of glory beams upon the horizon of eternity. It was no phantasy of the brain of my dying friend, when she spoke of Jesus standing by her bedside. Jesus stood by her in spirit and in truth. May He so stand by us all!

I needed not this death-scene to impress me with the fact of the immortality of the soul. Apart from the Gospel, every thing in life convinces me of it, and death asserts it positively—for

“The mind cannot always sleep in dust,  
Whose essence is ethereal.”

Spring has advanced upon us in all its beauty. The flowers seem to permeate the air with a richer perfume, and the birds to sing with a more bewitching melody than ever before; or it may be, that our private and public grief only maketh it to appear so, for in our despair we question the right

of the birds to sing, or the flowers to breathe forth their odors,—so bereft are our lives of the song and odor of existence.

As I look from my window towards the distant hills, covered with fresh verdure, and above them at the clouds floating so gracefully in the blue haze of the sky, all nature betokening such perfect good-will to man, it is difficult to realize the utter desolation of our country.

The war is over—but how? Alas! not as we hoped, not as we expected, when we freely laid our hearts' idols on the altars of our country. Alas! that country has not only become a huge mausoleum for our idols, but our hopes are laid away,

“—— as in a burial urn,  
Where sunshine may not find them.”

And the wail that rises over it, from desolated hearts, is wild and despairing.

But, in this despair, let us not forget OUR DEAD. Though their names be but a mournful sound, let us often speak of them. Let us beautify the sod that lies above them, and, while life is ours, let us teach our children to venerate their memories, and the purity of their intention, when they took up arms in the fearful struggle.



This, and the thought that God ruleth all things, and that we must school our hearts to bow to His decrees, will comfort us. Let us, therefore, recognize the march of events, and strive to obey the precepts of our Church, which enjoins its children to do their duty, in whatever state of life it shall please God to call them.

THE END.

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